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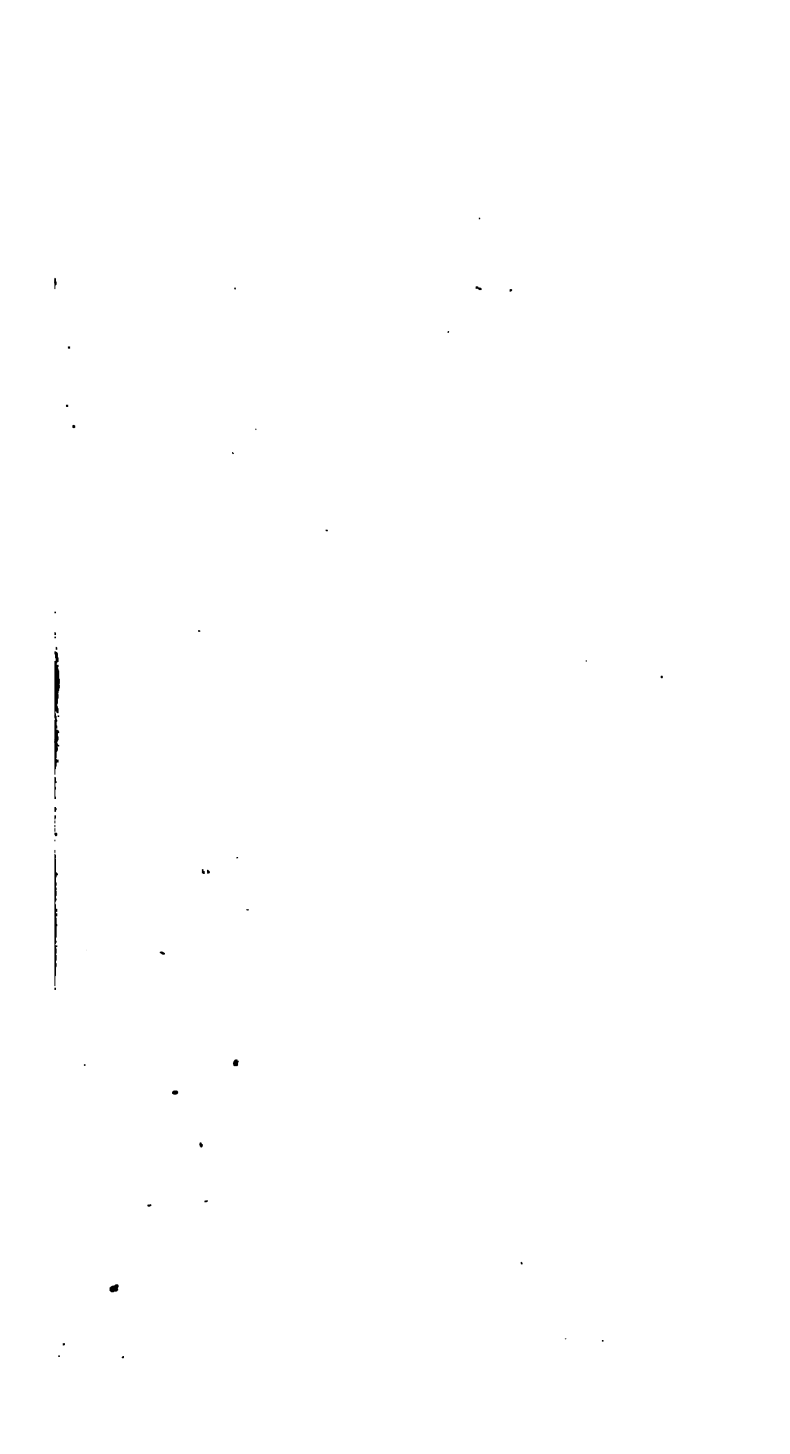




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HINTS

TO A

CLERGYMAN'S WIFE;

OR,

FEMALE PAROCHIAL DUTIES

Practically Illustrated.

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD."

LONDON:
HOLDSWORTH AND BALL,
18, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.
1832.

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LONDON :
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TO THE
REV. CHARLES BRIDGES,
WHOSE WORK ON
THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF THE FOLLOWING
“HINTS,”
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS
VERY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer's only object in publishing this volume, is the hope that it may, under God's blessing, prove of some little utility to those Christian females who are anxious to become true yoke-fellows to their husbands, in the faithful discharge of the high office of the Christian Ministry. Should it please the Great Head of the Church to bless this humble endeavour, and thus to promote the glory of his name, to Him be all the praise ascribed.

From a casual survey of the work, it may be thought that too much stress is laid upon the efficacy of *female* exertions. The reason that the name and services of the Clergyman's

wife are brought forward so prominently is, that the "Hints" are designed for *her* use alone. The writer has, throughout, sedulously sought not to outstep the bounds of that department of duty for which the female sex is more peculiarly adapted, or to interfere with those sacred obligations which exclusively belong to the Minister of the Gospel.

All the assistance that the Clergyman's wife can render to her husband in his labours of love, is, for the most part, of a subordinate nature; yet will she account it, as Mr. Cecil remarks, "her glory to lay herself out in co-operating with him," and rejoice to be in any way employed in the work of the Lord.

February, 1832.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER	1

PART I.

HINTS TO THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE RELATIVE TO HER PERSONAL CHARACTER.

CHAP. I.

Love to Christ, her constraining motive to Exertion	12
-----------------------------------------------------	----

CHAP. II.

On the right Employment of Influence	20
----------------------------------------------	----

CHAP. III.

The necessity of Consistency in her daily Conduct	33
---------------------------------------------------	----

CHAP. IV.

The importance of habitual Self-examination . .	46
-------------------------------------------------	----

PART II.

HINTS TO THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE RELATIVE TO
HER ACTIVE EXERTIONS AMONGST THE POOR.

CHAP. I.

	PAGE
Cottage Visits ,	59

CHAP. II.

Visits to the Sick	77
------------------------------	----

CHAP. III.

Schools	90
-------------------	----

CHAP. IV.

Religious Instruction of the Young, independently of the Schools	115
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAP. V.

Cottage Readings	129
----------------------------	-----

CHAP. VI.

Parochial Library, Tracts, &c.	141
----------------------------------------	-----

CHAP. VII.

Means suggested for the Employment of the Poor	177
------------------------------------------------	-----

CHAP. VIII.

Conclusion	193
----------------------	-----

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER,

CONTAINING

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE DUTIES INCUMBENT
UPON A CLERGYMAN'S WIFE.

PROV. xiv. 22.—“Mercy and truth shall be to them that
devise good.”

IN connexion with the more sacred duties which devolve upon the Minister of the Gospel, in the public ministration of the Word, arise a variety of lesser openings of usefulness, in which the co-operation of his partner may be of considerable importance. The private and retired walks of Christian love and benevolence, are more particularly referred to. The distinguishing characteristics of the female, are tenderness and compassion. These qualities, when combined with active and perse-

vering diligence, and stimulated by love to her Divine Saviour, will render the services of the Clergyman's wife highly useful to her husband, especially if his charge lie in a country parish. Let it be her first object, on entering so important a situation, to take a calm survey of the station in which Providence has placed her, and to inquire what are those peculiar departments of duty, which now more immediately devolve upon her. In some of these she might co-operate with her husband, and labour in conjunction with him. In others, she might take a subordinate part. In others she might form independent plans of operation, and exercise her mind in devising those schemes of usefulness for which her sex more peculiarly adapts her.

Under the first class might be included the visitation of the sick, more particularly among the women, at times, and under circumstances, when

female attendance is especially needed. The supply of the temporal wants of the sick person naturally devolves upon her; and while administering to their relief, opportunities, from time to time, occur for entering upon the most important of all subjects, and for conferring *spiritual* as well as *temporal* benefit. While seeking to mitigate temporal suffering, let it be her one object and delight to point the sufferers to Him, who is the only Refuge—the only Friend and Comforter—the only Hope and Stay in the hour of trial. Their guilt and misery in the ignorance of a Saviour; their constant and entire need of Him; his free and gracious invitations and promises to them; his love in chastening them; the design and the blessed fruits of sanctified affliction; these are the suitable and interesting topics to bring before their minds, with much and earnest prayer for the Divine blessing.

Cottage readings present another opening of usefulness of the same class. The admission to these little assemblies (which from their simplicity and retirement, form an appropriate work and labour of love for the Minister's wife) should be confined solely to females.

The Sunday school, together with the weekly instruction of the children, where practicable, should likewise be divided between the Clergyman and his partner, the latter superintending the female children, whilst the care of the boys devolves on her husband.

Under the second class might be mentioned the private instruction of the young women of the parish. Their various employments, whether in field labour, manufactories, or at their own homes, together with various local disadvantages, are frequent obstacles to any systematic plan of instruction. As far, however, as may be found practi-

cable, it is of the highest importance to labour in interesting their minds, awakening their consciences, and instructing their hearts. When this primary object is accomplished, confidential intercourse respecting their spiritual difficulties will naturally succeed, and those difficulties will probably be mentioned with far less reserve to the Minister's wife, than to the Minister himself. It is obvious that this course of private and familiar communication will materially subserve their more serious and intelligent reception of the truths delivered from the pulpit.

Under the last class would be embraced such *independent* plans of usefulness, as her zeal and ingenuity, her love to her God and Saviour, and her desire to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of her husband's parish might suggest; but as these will be more fully enumerated in the course

of the ensuing chapters, they shall now be only slightly touched upon. Let her, for instance, propose rewards and encouragements to cleanliness, diligence, and good order; let her endeavour to find employment for the industrious; let it be her delight to supply comfort to the aged; to give advice and assistance to the young and inquiring, and to open fresh channels of usefulness, from time to time, as circumstances occur. Let it be her constant endeavour to make religion a pleasure, not a burden—a privilege, not a task; and to exhibit the promises of the Gospel in all their freeness, fulness, and suitable application to the wants of sinners. Others may expend their precious hours in the gratification of personal vanity; others may seek to shine in the crowded assembly; others may waste

“The fleeting moments of too short a life,”

in the insipid routine of fashionable

amusements. *Her* joy will be of a higher nature. *Her* delight will be to be found in the poorest cottage, at the bed-side of the sick and dying, and employed in the humblest offices of Christian benevolence and love. With this desire predominant in her heart, the Clergyman's wife will call but a very small portion of her time her own, but, with her husband, will be ever ready to listen to the calls of ignorance and distress. An acquaintance with the individual character and circumstances of his flock, is of great importance, in order to avoid that imposition to which female benevolence is peculiarly liable, and to adapt her admonitions to their several cases. She will have frequent reason to combine firmness and resolution with her tenderness, and to act upon the deliberate exercise of her judgment, rather than yield to the impulse of the present moment.

In order, however, to carry her rules into execution, some arrangement of her time will be necessary. Every moment of the day must have its appropriate employment. Every hour must bring with it, its own portion of allotted duty. Much watchfulness, consideration and prayer, will be needed to preserve her various engagements from interfering with each other, or with her domestic duties; and that she may be ready for all opportunities of devoting herself to the responsibilities of her most interesting charge. To the plans which she has formed as best calculated to accomplish her purpose, she will, as far as possible, most strictly adhere; stimulated by the influence of Christian motives, and by the advantages which may justly be anticipated from perseverance in a course of regular methodical arrangement. Happy for her, if the exercise of early habits of

perseverance, punctuality, application, and industry, and the still more important habits of self-control, self-denial, and self-examination, supply the necessary energy for the present demands upon her. For she who has been early accustomed to keep her intellectual powers in action, and enabled, in some measure, by Divine grace, to regulate her inclinations, to set bounds to her desires, to govern her temper, to subdue her natural propensities, to watch against a trifling spirit and a wandering mind, and to consider herself as a responsible creature, will be far better qualified to discharge the obligations of a Clergyman's wife, than one who has been unused to restraint, and unaccustomed to the exercise of her mental faculties.

Lastly, let the simplicity of her motives mark her every action. Let none be able to say that private or personal feelings influenced any point of

her conduct. Let every thing be done as unto the Lord, and not unto man.

Need we remark the importance, nay, the indispensable necessity of *prayer*, in order to preserve an habitual sense of these solemn responsibilities, and to obtain supplies of Divine grace for their conscientious discharge? Nothing must be allowed to break in upon the duties of the closet. The early hour of morning, and the retired shades of evening must find her there, humbling herself before her Saviour under a sense of guilt, helplessness, and imperfection, and casting herself upon the covenant of her God for renewed and increasing communications of Divine aid to speed her on her way, and to direct and guide her amid the various emergencies which may perpetually arise. "Ask, and ye shall receive,"* must be the motto

* John xvi. 24.

imprinted on her memory, and inscribed on her heart.

Such is a general sketch of FEMALE parochial duties. They will be more fully illustrated in the subsequent chapters.

PART I.

HINTS TO THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE RELATIVE TO HER PERSONAL CHARACTER.

CHAP. I.

LOVE TO CHRIST, HER CONSTRAINING MOTIVE TO EXERTION.

2 Cor. v. 14.—“The love of Christ constraineth us.”

THE Minister's wife, in the survey of her husband's parish, will find a wide field for the exercise of her Christian charity and benevolence. The child looks up to her for instruction; the naked and miserable appeal to her for clothing; the starving for nourishment; the sick for consolation and sympathy; and surely it is no less her privilege than her duty, to supply bread to the hungry, clothing to the

destitute, instruction to the ignorant; to visit the abodes of poverty and disease,—to soothe the solicitude of tender mothers,—to sympathize with their sorrows, and relieve their varied wants,—to rejoice the heart of the widow, and “make it sing for joy,” by directing it to Him who is “a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, even God in his holy habitation.”*

Affection for her husband, and the desire of advancing his important work, may combine with a sense of duty to animate her endeavours to promote the welfare of his flock. But though she form a variety of plans with much zeal and energy, yet that zeal and energy may not be of the *right* kind. It may originate in mere self-love; in the gratification of a natural vivacity of spirit, or even a fondness for display; in an animal activity; or, in the hope of

* Psalm lxviii. 5.

beguiling some otherwise solitary hours by an interesting object of pursuit. The feelings and conduct of a Christian female will, however, be regulated by a higher motive:—“the love of Christ constrains her.” Gratitude for mercies received, and especially the stupendous mercy of redeeming love, compels her to dedicate herself, her time, her talents, her influence, her property, to the service of her heavenly Master. The language of her heart is, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”* Oh! let me devote my all to Him, who gave himself for me and to me. And how delightful is it to her to reflect upon *his* love in opening the door of mercy to lost sinners; *his* love in inviting her to “look unto Him, and be saved;” *his* love in pardoning and blotting out her sins, and attaching her heart to himself!

* Psalm cxvi. 12.

She asks herself why *she* has been made the especial object of her Redeemer's care. Why the Saviour has visited *her*, and made her—a “stranger and foreigner”—to be a “fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.”* Why *she*, “who was sometime far off, has been made nigh by the blood of Christ?” The answer to these, and similar inquiries, supplies her with a constraining motive to exertion beyond, far beyond, any that the world could bestow. The language of her heart is that of devout thankfulness, mingled with earnest aspirations for more entire devotedness to Him who has purchased her for his service.

She reflects, farther, upon her Saviour's love, in having thus far guided and directed her steps; in having placed her in her present important and interesting situation; in having intrusted to her care some portion of

* Eph. ii. 19.

the lambs of his flock, to train and nurture for his heavenly fold. These thoughts fill her mind with gratitude. She longs to be employed in the work thus consigned to her. She eagerly embraces the privilege of becoming, in some humble measure, a fellow-helper to the Truth.

She relies, moreover, on the rich promises of grace vouchsafed to those who are seeking to promote the Redeemer's glory. Though conscious of her own daily and hourly imperfections, yet she is enabled to rest on the assurance of her Saviour that his "grace shall be sufficient for her;" that "his strength shall be made perfect in her weakness;"* that his love and tenderness shall sustain her under her infirmities, and graciously condescend to accept of her imperfect services.

Love is, therefore, her motive to exertion.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

But if the *motive*, by which the Christian Minister's wife is actuated, be thus powerful, we may naturally expect that its effect upon her feelings and conduct in all the relations of life, will be proportionably strong. We know that in worldly pursuits any powerful impulse carries away the mind with an irresistible bias. Thus will the love of Christ in the Christian female's heart, like the resistless torrent, bear down all opposition, burst through all intervening obstacles, and constrain her to "live no longer to herself, but unto Him that died for her and rose again;"* and just in proportion to her love of her Saviour, will be her desire to promote both the temporal and eternal interests of her fellow-creatures. Her feelings will dictate the repeated inquiry, "What can I do for Christ? How can I show forth his praises?" Her heart is full, and she "cannot but

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

speak the things which she has seen and heard."* "My beloved is mine"—her language is—"and I am his."† My Saviour is "the chiefest among ten thousand, yea, he is altogether lovely."‡ She acknowledges that she is no longer her own, because she has been "bought with a price;" and hence she is bound "to glorify God in her body and in her spirit which are his."§ She feels that no principle is so inspiring as the love of Christ, arising from a sense of unspeakable obligation to his redeeming mercy. She is also constrained by her Saviour's express command, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."¶ This is the rule by which her daily conduct, both in her family and parish, is governed. She remembers that Christ is honoured,

* Acts iv. 20. † Song ii. 16. ‡ Song v. 10, 16.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. ¶ John xiv. 15, 21.

and his “Father glorified, if we bear much fruit.”* Her walk is holy and consistent. She brings her religion into the every day duties of life. All the powers of her mind are directed into one channel. She is content to deny herself, to take up her cross, to “follow” her Saviour “whithersoever he goeth.”†

Such is the constraining influence of redeeming love—the only effectual spring of Christian devotedness. Oh! that every heart engaged in this work of God, may be subjugated and quickened by its Divine influence!

* John xv. 8.

† Rev. xiv. 4.

CHAP. II.

ON THE RIGHT EMPLOYMENT OF INFLUENCE.

Luke xix. 13.—“Occupy till I come.”

To each class of society, and to each individual whom the class embraces, God has committed talents, to be severally dedicated to his service and employed for his glory. The more public the situation, the greater is the trust, and the responsibility connected with it.

Talents are of various kinds. The general term includes all our innumerable providential mercies:—all the faculties and powers of our minds; our natural and acquired endowments; our health; our time; our influence; our property; our privileges, and our

opportunities of usefulness. The Christian will ever regard these talents as a valuable and sacred trust, for the right employment of which, as a rational and moral agent, he is accountable to God. The direction of his Saviour, "Occupy till I come," will seldom be absent from his thoughts.

If such be the case with both sexes, and in every class of society, no inconsiderable portion of this responsibility devolves upon the wife of the Christian Minister. Her peculiar situation gives her much influence over the parish in which she resides, and this talent she will assiduously endeavour to employ, as far as possible, to the honour of her Lord and Master. The very circumstance of the Clergyman being the individual to whom the people look for religious instruction and counsel, necessarily throws a measure of influence into the hands of his wife. In a contracted sphere, it will

probably be greater than when expanded over a wider field; but, in either case, it is a most important and serviceable talent, which it will be her duty to guard and husband for the efficient prosecution of the work of God. Whether it be little or much, let her take care to cast it into the right scale, and exercise it under the habitual influence of Christian motives. The principles of the rising generation, in her immediate neighbourhood, will much depend upon her instructions; for truly upon her devolves, in no small degree, the anxious employment of sowing the seed of life in the morning of youth;—a seed-time which, with all its trials and discouragements, is connected, in the Divine dispensation, with the promise of a fruitful harvest.

The influence of a Clergyman's wife is of a twofold nature. It is partly derived from her husband's connexion with the parish, and partly from her

own individual character and exertions. As the wife of their Minister, the female part of the parish will naturally look to her for counsel and direction. Numerous channels will thus be opened for the employment of all her talents, but especially of her *influence*; and this gift let her seek to lay out to the best advantage, and to cherish and increase, by maternal solicitude for their highest interests and by a general spirit of kindness, conciliation, and love. Let her ear be open to every appeal, and her heart to every tale of woe. Let her endeavour, in cases of dissension, to soften animosity; to assuage anger and irritation; to remove prejudice and its usual concomitant, ignorance; to pour the oil of consolation into the bosom of the agitated and oppressed, and thus gradually to become the general peace-maker in all the little turmoils of a country parish. This can only be effected by maintaining a high Christian

character, and combining much of the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. All party feeling must be discountenanced. No one must be able to say that she dispenses her bounties with partiality, or even preference. It must be universally understood and borne in mind, that good conduct and Christian behaviour can alone secure favour at the parsonage.

The Christian wisdom and intelligence of the true servant of Christ will be much increased by the exercise of her various duties. She will learn as she proceeds. Her experience will ripen from day to day, and the numerous instances that are perpetually occurring to try her temper and to exercise her judgment, will make her more and more fitted to cope with difficulties, and to feel at home in her work. She will become increasingly interested in witnessing the happy result of her

efforts, so far as God is pleased to bless them. Her desire to do "whatsoever her hand findeth to do, with all her might," will strengthen. Her capacities of usefulness will enlarge, and she will not only effect more than she did at the commencement of her work, but there will be an evident improvement in the manner of its execution; she will act with more decision, and mingle less of human infirmity, less of self, and less of injudicious and misplaced endeavours in her essays to do good.*

A subordinate method of gaining and maintaining influence, will arise from the measure of pecuniary relief placed at her disposal. This of course must be regulated by personal means, calculated in the spirit of prudence and self-denial; but whether it be small or great, much wisdom from above will be needed for its just and suitable

* See Rev. D. Wilson's Sermons—'The Parable of the Talents.'

distribution. A minute knowledge and personal observation of individual characters among her husband's people, will tend to guard her against the artful pretensions of a plausible profession, and enable her to restrain the over-reaching forwardness of the importunate, and at the same time to encourage the backwardness of the more modest and retiring. Thus will she deal out the contents of her charity-purse with equal hand to the deserving objects of her benevolence, carefully discriminating between real and imaginary want, and cheerfully endeavouring, according to the Apostolical rule, to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

* It may not perhaps be irrelevant to remind the reader of Dr. Doddridge's advice in reference to the mode of dispensing pecuniary relief. He recommends that a certain portion of our income should be laid by every year as a separate fund appropriated to charitable purposes only; that we should look upon what

Perhaps of all the talents committed to us, that of *Influence* is the most important. The female possesses this in a peculiar degree ; and her due exercise of it may subserve the highest purposes, and become a powerful though silent auxiliary to the interests of the church of God.

Let the Clergyman's wife seek, in an especial manner, for heavenly guidance in reference to this talent. Let her seek for that "wisdom which is from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."* Let her often and seriously reflect upon her account to

is so deposited as not in any sense our own, but as actually disposed of, though not yet affixed to particular objects. "By this means," he observes, "there will always be a charity fund at hand, and we shall probably be more ready to communicate it to others, than we should were it regarded as part of the contents of our own purse." See *Rise and Progress*, chap. xxviii.

* James iii. 17.

God for all she has, and her consequent obligation to devote herself to his glory. *Influence* has been particularly mentioned, because in her situation it may be regarded as a talent of paramount importance; but let her not conceive herself to be less responsible for the diligent use of every other gift, of which, when her Lord cometh, a strict account must be rendered.

Among these must be reckoned *the special opportunities of usefulness* connected with her situation. A due sense of the responsibility attached to them will stimulate her endeavours to improve them to the highest advantage, and to the grand object which is nearest her heart. No opportunity of promoting the welfare of her husband's flock will be wilfully neglected. Every circumstance that occurs in the parish, out of the ordinary routine, will furnish her with some subject for suitable

remark or reflection. She will not be satisfied with merely adopting the plans laid down by others ; but will, if possible, enter on ground before untrod, and trace out new modes of usefulness. If her mind be ardently bent on this important end, it will become fertile in new devices for the happiness of the people among whom Providence has placed her. Favourable events will continually arise ; and she will find that occasions of doing good not unfrequently unfold themselves when she least expects it. But let her watch, lest despondency paralyze her energies. Let her not be discouraged by the anticipation of small results from simple intentions and persevering endeavours. Let her take encouragement from our Lord's commendation of the poor woman, who, in the consciousness of unworthiness, and the abasement of love, dedicated her all to her Saviour's service—"She hath

done what she could.”* Let her not suppose that any act of Christian love can be unfruitful or unacceptable.† We are generally too eager to see grand results ; but we should learn to do good for the sake of doing good, and because it is the will of our God and Saviour. It may please Him, indeed, often to hide from us our actual importance in the movements of the great machinery of Providence and grace, lest we should forget that we are at best but sinful and weak instruments, whom He condescends to employ ; and lest we should, in the pride of our hearts, forget his sovereign agency, and say, “Is not this great Babylon which I have built ?”‡ We must recollect also, that, in the moral as in the natural world, great and general good is commonly effected, not by one powerful impulse, but by

* Mark xiv. 8.

† See Matt. x. 42.

‡ Dan. iv. 30.

an almost infinite variety and succession of impulses ; hence a long course of perseverance is necessary to success.

To conclude. Many circumstances of painful discouragement will occur to hinder us in our work, and even to tempt us to relinquish it. But looking to our Lord and Master, and simply depending upon the faithful promise that " God will supply all our need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus,"* we shall be enabled to hold on our course. Soon will all our trials and difficulties pass away. We shall rest from our labours, to spend a blissful eternity in our Saviour's bosom, praise, and service. Let us, therefore, whilst toiling here below, and seeking to devote our talents to his glory, place all our trust in this our beloved Saviour for acceptance and assistance. He will graciously take us under his charge. He

* Phil. iv. 19.

will guard us from danger. He will sustain and strengthen us in every time of need. He will grant us from day to day supplies of his life-giving presence, and cause us to drink at the fountain of living waters. Ere long we shall hear the joyful invitation—
 “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*
 We shall receive, through the merits of that Redeemer in whose service whilst on earth we delighted, the “crown of righteousness,” which is laid up for “all them that love his appearing.”† We shall be clothed in the robes of salvation, and participate in the “pleasures that are at God’s right hand for evermore.”‡

* Matt. xxv. 34. † 2 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Psalm xvi. 11.

CHAP. III.

THE NECESSITY OF CONSISTENCY IN HER DAILY CONDUCT.

EPH. v. 15.—“ See then that ye walk circumspectly.”

THE Minister's family will ever be regarded as the model upon which the families of the parish are to be framed. Its actions will be appealed to, as the standard of right or wrong. Its want of propriety, consistency, or correctness, will furnish their excuse for the neglect of duty, and the indulgence of sinful conduct. The religion of the parish will rarely surpass the standard displayed in the Christian parsonage, and, ordinarily, will not rise to the same level. This will be found to be peculiarly the case in a

country village, where every circumstance that occurs under the Minister's roof, every plan which is there adopted; almost every sentiment there uttered, will be known, talked over, and commented upon by the people. The slightest deviation from the strictness of Christian consistency will be marked; the smallest measure of liberty taken, on doubtful points, will be construed into a permission for worldliness and indifference. The Sunday walk, for instance, of any part of the Minister's family, though for the purposes of religious retirement, will be converted, by the more indifferent and worldly-minded among the neighbours, into an excuse for their various sinful violations of that holy season. If the habits and principles of the Clergyman's wife and children contradict the pulpit instructions of the husband and parent, his doctrine and exhortations will only excite the ridicule of those

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It is by her that the various arrangements of the family will be ordered. It is under her directions that the household economy will be regulated; and self-gratification, indulgence, and convenience, be subordinated to the main object—the good of her husband's flock. It will be in the neatness, simplicity, and modesty of *her* attire, and that of her children and servants, that the admonition of the Apostle, in reference to the holy women of old, will be exemplified. “Not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of

she is inclined to the world, will preach worldly compliance with more success by her conduct, than her husband can preach the renunciation of the world by the most solemn discourses.”—*Bridges's Christian Ministry*.

See also, Life of the Rev. Legh Richmond. In a letter addressed to his daughter on her marriage to a Clergyman, he writes — “A minister's wife may be a main-spring of encouragement or discouragement to her husband in all his arduous and anxious occupations for the good of his flock. On her example and demeanour very much may often depend.”

apparel; but the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.”*

In a word, she will seek, by her whole demeanour, by the economical arrangement of her time, by the management of her family, and by her general consistency of conduct, both to act and walk as one who is anxious to give a practical illustration of the various instructions she is continually imparting to others. She cannot expect that the mothers of her parish will attend to her maternal injunctions,—or that the young females will listen to her kind but faithful admonitions,—unless both the one and the other perceive that she herself walks by the rule which she lays down for them; and that she enforces no less strictness in her own family than she urges upon

* 1 Pet. iii. 3—5.

theirs. Nor is this the only point of importance. Religion is much recommended to the heart by such a course of conduct. The beauty and loveliness of its various points are exemplified, and *that* under a far more attractive form than that of mere didactic instruction. The blessed Redeemer himself condescended, not only to teach his disciples, but to set them “an example, that they should follow his steps.”* “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”† The Apostle adopted similar language: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”‡ “Those things, which ye have both heard and seen in me, do,” &c.§ Indeed among the various methods employed by the Holy Spirit for our instruction, the most interesting and

* 1 Pet. ii. 21.

† John x. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

§ Phil. iv. 9.

attractive is, perhaps, that of *example*. Scarcely a truth is stated in the Bible without some corresponding illustration in a subsequent chapter. Are we directed, for instance, to watch against the temptations of Satan? Peter is brought before our notice, as affording an example of the danger arising from the neglect of this duty. Is faith again insisted on? Abraham is exhibited to our view as the father of the faithful. Is "patience to have its perfect work" in our minds? we are told of "the patience of Job,"* and of its happy results. We read again of Dorcas, "who was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did."† The sacred historians pass by casually, or in silence, many of the great and distinguished achievements that agitated the public mind during their day, to descend to the more retired walks of private life, and to record, for our encouragement, the effects

* James v. 11.

† Acts ix. 36.

produced by the Gospel on the hearts and the conduct of various individuals, whom the eye of God had marked and singled out, as examples of the power of Divine grace, for the instruction of succeeding ages. The same means are adopted in the present day; the same Divine power is in operation; the same blessed results follow now, as in the first ages of the church; and hence the wife of a Christian Minister has a delightful encouragement to seek, in her peculiar sphere of duty, to imitate the holy women of old—exemplifying, in her daily temper and conduct, the character and spirit of her Lord and Master. Let her shun every semblance of personal feeling towards any individual of her charge; and let her strive to act the part of a mother amongst her husband's people, as well as that of a guardian and director in his domestic circle. This line of conduct would tend to restrain, and put

to shame, many evils in the parish. Idleness would be discountenanced, untidiness discouraged, regularity in the payment of debts promoted.* Passion and ill-temper, backbiting and slander would hide their faces. Sabbath lounging and profaneness would be in a great measure suppressed, by the persevering exhibition of a uniform and consistent course.

To maintain, however, this high and Christian pattern, much prayer and watchfulness will be required on the part of the Clergyman's wife. Events will be continually occurring to try and vex her temper, and to tempt her

* A cottager in the village of * * * * * one day remarked, "Mr. ——— teaches us what is right by his actions. He never owes any debt which he does not pay on the Saturday evening ; so that we learn it is our duty as Christians always to pay our debts ; and, as we have often remarked to each other, we cannot get up of a Sunday morning owing money, and our consciences not tell us of it. I have heard one of my neighbours say, that when he has owed Mr. ——— any thing, he has been quite ashamed to meet him as he went to church."

to shrink from her elevated and responsible standard of profession. Hence she must implore continual guidance and strength from above, that she may be enabled to preserve simplicity of purpose, singleness of mind, and a willingness to be the handmaid of all, seeking, like her Lord and Master, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”*

She must try herself, from time to time, by the standard of Divine truth, and by the life and temper of her Saviour, as described and illustrated in the Gospels, in order to discover whether her own character and conversation bear any resemblance to the model there portrayed for her imitation. Let her frequently ask herself such questions as these:—Am I no longer conformed to the spirit, the maxims, the fashions of the world? Do I seek to shew to my husband’s people the “more excellent way?” Do I endeavour to adorn the

* Matt. xx. 28.

doctrine of God my Saviour in all things? Has my "conversation been in heaven?" Whilst I invite others to "taste and see that the Lord is good," do I, in my own conduct, bring forth any fruits of righteousness to his praise and glory? or do I invite others to experience that love, that joy, that peace in believing, to which I am myself a stranger? Does my habitual walk evince the sincerity of my Christian profession? Do I set my husband's flock an example of humility, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, forbearance, charity, and indifference to the vanities and pursuits of the worldly-minded? If she *really* loves God, and longs to be numbered among his peculiar people;—if she *really* aims to "shew forth the praises of Him who hath called her out of darkness into his marvellous light,"* she will not rest satisfied, until, through Divine grace, she is enabled to reply,

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Such is my earnest desire,—such is my fervent petition. I feel that I am “not my own,” but “bought with a price,”* even the precious blood of Jesus, and that I must “therefore glorify Him in my body and in my spirit, which are his.” Her delight will be with the “saints that are in the earth.”† She will be among those “who speak often one to another; who fear the Lord, and think upon his name.”‡ She will seek to win others by the Christian consistency and loveliness of her own deportment; and her daily motto will be that adopted by Joshua of old,—“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”§ She will do all in her power (under the Divine blessing) to promote his glory whilst here on earth, and look forward with joyful hope to that period, when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Psalm xvi. 3.

‡ Mal. iii. 16.

§ Joshua xxiv. 15.

Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”*

* Isaiah xxxv. 10.

CHAP. IV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HABITUAL SELF- EXAMINATION.

2 COR. xiii. 5.—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”

ONE of the most important checks upon the Christian in his daily walk and conversation, is the habit of close, faithful self-examination. Instead of resting satisfied with the mere ordinary duties and exercises, which custom or education may have led him to adopt, he must frequently recur to self-examination as a means of ascertaining the sincerity of his faith, and his advancement in the ways of holiness.

As the traveller, in ascending a steep Alpine precipice, will pause and look

around him, when he reaches a break or resting-place, to mark his progress, the obstacles he has already surmounted, and the best means of gaining the summit before him ; so should the Christian traveller, in mounting Zion's hill, stop, as it were, from time to time on his road, in order to examine at what point he has already arrived, how he may best overcome the difficulties that still present themselves, and quicken his energies to press forwards on his heavenward journey.

In proportion to the responsibility of the station, the number of difficulties to be surmounted, and duties to be performed, will be the importance of the practice of habitual self-examination.

The wife of the Christian Minister, surrounded as she is with dangers, and appointed to fulfil many important offices, not merely in her family, but in the parish which she is called

to superintend, will find it peculiarly needful to retire, from time to time, from her more public engagements, in order to converse with her own heart, and inquire into the state of her individual progress heavenward. Deeply sensible of her own innate corruption, and of the subtle devices of the great enemy, to which she is ever exposed, she will find it a beneficial exercise thus to withdraw occasionally from the daily circle of active duties which surround her, to commune with her own soul before her God, to watch the movements of her heart, to mark the snares which are laid for it, to humble herself for her sins, and to seek renewed strength from on high.

She will commence her investigation by an *inquiry into the practical influence, upon her own soul, of those truths she is anxiously inculcating upon others.*

Aware of the danger of self-deception, she will not rest satisfied with

mere active employment, in her Christian course, but will repeatedly ask herself during these seasons of private retirement,—Am I advancing in my own soul? Are my views of the Saviour more clear and spiritual? Is my dependence upon Him more simple, and my devotedness to Him more constant? Do I delight in his precepts as well as in his promises? Do I watch against the risings of sin, the temptations of Satan, and the corrupting influence of the world?

She will next inquire into the *motives of her conduct*, lest self-seeking, or vain-glory and the desire of human applause, should render them displeasing to God. She will search deep into her principles of action, and weigh all her motives in the balance of the sanctuary. She will endeavour to discover whether her whole mind is subject to the influence of the Gospel of Christ, and to ascertain what “manner of spirit” she is of.

Her examination as to this point will lead to the inquiries — Have I been actuated by a pure and simple desire to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?”* Has there been no mixture of pride and self? Have I allowed no selfish consideration in the mode of exercising my benevolence to interfere with the promotion of the glory of that Being “whose I am, and whom I serve?”† Has love to the Saviour constituted the sole ground of my obedience? Ample scope is here afforded for self-scrutiny, humiliation, and prayer.

The *employment of her time* will next come under review. Have I economized it for the service of God? Have I denied myself, in order to save time and opportunities for the benefit of others? Have I occupied with my talents to the best advantage? In a word, have I sought to “glorify God

* Col. iii. 17.

† Acts xxvii. 23.

with my body and spirit which are his ?”*

Lastly, let the Minister's wife examine herself as to *the feelings connected with the success of her work*. Has the praise been given unreservedly to Him to whom alone it was due? Can she say, from the bottom of her heart,—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory?”† Does she feel herself, after all, an “unprofitable servant,” and consider it her highest privilege to be permitted, though in the smallest measure, to labour in her Master's vineyard? The success of her labours is much connected with this genuine spirit of Christian simplicity and self-renunciation. God will never vouchsafe his blessing to those who deprive him of a part of the glory; who allow any inferior motives to interfere with the Christian's paramount object,—the honour of his

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† Psalm cxv. 1.

God, and the advancement of his Saviour's kingdom. Much watchfulness and prayer are requisite to guard against the art, and power, and subtlety of Satan, in suggesting unworthy motives to exertion; and introducing natural instead of spiritual principles, wholly inadequate to the vast emergency.

It is, however, most important to understand the principles which the duty of self-examination implies, and the spirit in which it should be conducted. It implies a consciousness not only of the general corruption of our nature, but of the guilt and spiritual defilement that stains every human endeavour. It supposes our feeling of the danger of self-deception, and our desire to walk with God, in a state of constant acceptance and habitual dedication. It is connected with a simple dependence upon Divine teaching, to unveil the hidden recesses and depraved inclinations of the heart.

It needs also that “wisdom which is from above, which is without partiality and without hypocrisy;” * so that we may not seek to palliate our sins, but try ourselves fully and fairly by the unerring standard of self-examination,—the Word of God. Brought to this touchstone, how many actions, apparently praiseworthy in the eyes of our fellow-creatures, will be rejected as “reprobate silver” by that Holy Being “who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins!”† How much mixture of sin and self will be discovered even in our holiest duties! We shall perceive that our very devotions are mixed with sin, that our alms-givings and all our religious services are defiled and polluted, and, ere they can be acceptable to God, have need to be washed in the blood of Christ.

Christian watchfulness is a duty peculiarly needful to the Minister’s wife.

* James iii. 17.

† Jer. xvii. 10.

Utterly helpless as she is in herself, and mighty and subtle as are the enemies she has to withstand, let her exercise her privilege of committing herself to the Lord. Let her keep a vigilant guard over her own heart; seeking to obtain a more accurate perception of her besetting temptations, and watching lest the snares and seductions of the world should lull her asleep, or the influence of self-love wrap her up in a state of carnal ease and security. We shall find a deep acquaintance with ourselves to be one of the best safeguards against spiritual pride. When we look around, and compare our own actions with those of others, we are apt to be elated with an idea of our own superiority; but when we look within, and try ourselves impartially by the standard of God's law, we are at once convinced of our utter unprofitableness, and laid, in contrition of soul, at the foot of the cross.

The Clergyman's wife will find seasons of retirement and self-examination highly beneficial to her own soul. While all proceeds with apparent prosperity, without inquiry into her own spiritual state, she will be inclined to rest satisfied with the performance of mere external duties. Close and diligent self-examination will, however, humble her under the sense of manifold deficiencies; while, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, she will be led to depend more simply upon her Saviour for the needful supplies of his grace. Thus will she be encouraged to greater efforts, and to warmer zeal. Her gradual progress in Divine things will become marked, and she will be enabled inwardly to rejoice that God has done great things for her. If she *has* been advancing, her heart will be lifted up in thankfulness, and she will feel stimulated to press forwards with renewed earnestness, in the sweet assurance that

He who has "begun a good work in her, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Or if, on the contrary, she is conscious that she 'did run well,' but something has 'hindered' her, she will humbly seek for pardon through the blood of the Lamb; she will fly to the throne of grace for strength and direction; renew her diligence; set a fresh watch over her actions and conduct; guard more carefully against the first temptations to backslide, and thus "run the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart."* That distraction of mind which active employment is apt to produce, will be much corrected by the habit of *self-examination*: the feelings

* To persons of a well-disciplined and well-instructed mind, habitually exercised in active faith, and living in constant communion with God, a *stated season* set apart for self-examination might be useful: — the Saturday or Sunday evening for instance.

There are, however, others, who, maintaining a habit of self-inspection as regards their motives, principles,

will become calmed ; the hurry of the thoughts hushed ; and the heart better prepared for entering anew, with child-like confidence, upon coming duties. The Clergyman's wife will leave her closet with full purpose of mind to set out afresh, as it were, on her heavenly journey, and " forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, will press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* The language of her soul will be, " Examine me, O Lord, and prove me."† " Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the

and individual state, probably improve seasons of abstraction *as they occur in providence*, or as they *may be dictated by conscience* ; but who, from a variety of causes, local or constitutional, would be rather hindered than assisted by a periodical system. The general habit is all that is insisted on.

* Phil. iii. 13, 14.

† Psalm xxvi. 2.

way everlasting.”* Fervent prayer for the influences of the Holy Spirit will, of course, accompany these acts of secret devotion. Hence the Divine blessing will be poured out more abundantly, and the Christian labourer will “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

PART II.

HINTS TO THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE RELATIVE TO HER ACTIVE EXERTIONS AMONGST THE POOR.

CHAP. I.

COTTAGE VISITS.

JAMES i. 27.—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

"THE characteristic of a Minister's wife," observes Mr. Bridges, "should be the main feature of the Gospel—a disciple of the cross. In uniting herself to a Christian minister, she has bound herself to his work and to his cross; and must expect, *as far as she appears by her husband's side*, not only to sympathize, but actually to share in the double measure of hardness, misrepresentation, and reproach, portioned

out to the faithful Minister; — trials that will exercise all those habits of love, humility, patience, and self-denial, that constitute the spirit of the cross. Nothing connected with her can be neutral. Should she wrap herself up in cold indifference to the advancement of her husband's ministry, regardless of the line of conduct best adapted to strengthen his most important interests; or, even should she 'faint and be weary' *of the work rather than in it*, she must clog the wheels of the machine instead of supplying oil for its accelerated progress.* Any lack

* "It is scarcely to be calculated," remarks Mr. Cecil, "what an influence the spirit of a Minister's wife will have on his own, and on all his ministerial affairs. If she come not up to the full standard, she will so far impede him, derange him, unsanctify him. If there is such a thing as good in the world, it is in the ministerial office. The affairs of this employment are the greatest in the world. In prosecuting these with a right spirit, the Minister keeps in motion a vast machine; and such are the incalculable consequences of his wife's character to him, that if she assist him not in urging forward the machine, she will hang as a dead weight upon its wheels."—*Cecil's Remains*.

also of kindness or consideration on her part, widens the distance between the pastor and his flock; and restrains many of those sources of ministerial communication, which are the fruitful channels of mutual enlargement and support. On the other hand, by a natural spirit of conciliation and flow of sympathy, much, that otherwise had been restrained, is drawn forth with freedom; and an additional bond of reciprocal attachment is formed between the father and his numerous family.” *

Supposing the Clergyman's wife to enter her husband's parish deeply impressed with such considerations as these; and earnestly desiring to become a helpmeet to him in all his arduous and often painful exertions for the good of his flock, her first inquiry (especially if she has been previously unaccustomed to visit among the poor) will naturally be—How am I to com-

* See Rev. C. Bridges's Christian Ministry.

mence my work ? What method can I best adopt to gain an acquaintance with the poor around me, and to obtain their confidence and affectionate regard ?

Her first step will perhaps be, by a short visit to the several cottages, to obtain some idea of the state of the parish, and of the general character of the families belonging to it. This slight individual acquaintance with the people will suggest some more systematic arrangement for her subsequent visits, as the peculiar circumstances of the different families may require.

Her principal aim in this preliminary round of visits, should be to gain the affections, and to secure the confidence of the people. She will endeavour, therefore, to convince them that Christian motives alone, and a lively interest in their welfare, actuate her exertions among them. Many topics of friendly conversation and inquiry will readily suggest themselves to her as she enters

the different cottages ; and in selecting these, she will of course exercise her own good sense and discretion. Her first inquiries should relate to those subjects which afford the greatest interest to the poor ; such as the number of which the family consists ; the names and ages of the children ; the occupation of those who are capable of work ; the schools which the younger ones attend, &c. There must be a tone of tenderness in her manner of proposing these questions, and a sympathy and kindness in listening to the replies they elicit. The poor are very susceptible of kindly feeling ; and reserve and coldness are easily chased away, when they perceive in their superiors a readiness to hear their simple tales, and a willingness to enter into subjects connected with their welfare. When the inquiries are kindly received, it will be well more minutely to ascertain their habits of attendance or neglect of

public worship ; their different employments ; their means of subsistence—whether by parochial relief, manual labour, charity or otherwise ;* —their period of residence in the parish ; amount of rent paid for their cottage ; their attention to family prayer, and daily reading of the Holy Scriptures ; and their mode of passing the Sabbath, as well as various other particulars ; which, although they may seem more immediately to claim her husband's attention, yet will give her an insight into the general character and habits of the poor, and consequently render her exertions in her own department more efficient.

The following *Speculum Parochiale* will be found useful, especially in a large parish, in facilitating her acquaintance with the people.

* Some of these minute questions, however, will require great delicacy to avoid prying curiosity, than which nothing is more grating to the minds of the poor. They may, of course, be varied or omitted at discretion.

No.	Name.	Residence.	Occupation.	Children.	Age.	Employ.	School.	General Remarks.
1	William and Betty Clements.	Longwood Lane.	Labourer. Washerwoman.	Charlotte . Jane . . . Mary . . . Ann . . . Lydia . . .	18 9 9 6 1	Lacemaker.	Sunday. Day. Ditto. Ditto.	Appear to be a well-ordered, de- serving family.— Three Bibles.
2	Henry and Nanny Sumners.	East end.	Labourer. Washerwoman.	Thomas . . Ann . . . Jane . . . Fanny . . .	19 16 14 10	Labourer. Sunday. Ditto. Day.	Tidy, respectable people. Nanny keeps bees, and sells the honey.— Only two Bibles.
3	Solomon and Mary Maul.	Cottage by the Park Gate.	Labourer.	Lucy . . .	17	Sunday.	Mother and daughter wanting employment. The former has poor health.

She might carry a paper, ruled in this manner, in her hand, during her preliminary visits ; and, to prevent confusion, insert, on the spot, the facts required, where it could be done without danger of giving offence. The families might be numbered in rotation, as she goes from cottage to cottage ; and some private mark made to bring to her remembrance those particulars respecting them which it had not been convenient to enumerate at the time.

A brief and friendly conversation with the cottagers, respecting their temporal wants, will open the way gently and prudently to direct their attention to the importance of religious instruction, and an acquaintance with the great doctrines of the Gospel. Let us inquire whether they are, or are not, in possession of the Holy Scriptures ; whether they can, and do, habitually read them ; and whether they are anxiously bringing up their children

‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;’ endeavouring, at the same time, to impress upon their minds the danger of being too much absorbed in worldly cares, and of neglecting the ‘one thing needful.’ We should also feel it our duty to speak to them of the privilege of possessing that Book which is ‘able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.’ If they are not in possession of a copy, we might encourage them to lay by their weekly pence in order to procure one; promising to take care of their money, to collect it regularly, and to furnish them with a Bible, when the sum required for obtaining it is complete. Free contributions might be solicited from those who know the value of the Holy Scriptures, and are anxious to impart the knowledge of them to their ignorant neighbours, and to the perishing world. It will be most important to urge upon them the duty and

privilege of observing the Sabbath, of secret and family prayer, and of a regular attendance at God's house ; and, also, to point out to them, as occasion may require, their relative duties, and give suitable advice as to domestic economy, diligence, frugality, and order. The young, the sick, and the aged, will require particular attention. We should encourage parents to send their children to the weekly and Sunday schools ; and enforce upon them the necessity of sending them regularly, and of upholding the authority of the teachers, in cases of necessary punishment, instead of exciting a spirit of insubordination by injudiciously taking the part of their children. The elder members of the family, who cannot read, should be recommended and encouraged to attend the adult school. Habits of self-denial, industry, and cleanliness, should be inculcated ; and every effort made to

promote a cheerful contented disposition, and to lead them to look at the bright side even of those little adverse circumstances which are perpetually occurring in this changing and uncertain world. The poor (especially those of a repining and discontented spirit) are naturally led to murmur at the dispensations of Providence towards them. They often need to be reminded that happiness belongs to a cottage, no less than to a palace; that it depends upon character, not upon circumstances; and that he alone enjoys substantial happiness who has the fear of God before his eyes, and the love of Christ in his heart, and who makes the rule of the Bible the directory of his daily life.*

* The well-known tract of "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain" admirably illustrates these principles. "Father," said the shepherd's little daughter, "I wish I was big enough to say grace, I am sure I should say it very heartily to-day, for I was thinking what must *poor* people do, who have no salt to their potatoes; and do but look, *our* dish is quite full." "That is the true

Perhaps, also, with the view of promoting the temporal comfort of our poor, it might sometimes be useful to propose prizes for cleanliness. A set of tea-things, a milkpail, a tea-kettle, or some trifling article of furniture, promised to the cottager whose house we shall visit a given number of times without finding cause for complaint, would give a stimulus to the woman's exertions, and increase the comforts of her home. Much, also, may be often done in suggesting employment to persons out of work.* This would excite a spirit of industry amongst them, in the place of that lassitude and idleness which creeps over those who, whether from indolence or necessity, are unoccupied.

way of thinking, my child," replied her father: "in whatever concerns bodily wants and bodily comforts, it is our duty to compare our own lot with the lot of those who are worse off; and this will keep us thankful."

* Various methods will be suggested in a subsequent chapter.

The advantages of savings-banks and friendly societies should also be pointed out, as means by which they may obtain help in times of special need from the fruit of their own exertions, and without losing their independence. They might also be encouraged to bring deposits to the parsonage, in the assurance that they should be carefully preserved till the end of the year, and then laid out for them in articles of clothing, materials for work, &c., to the best advantage.* Yet, in all plans

* There should be a specified time for bringing these little deposits to the parsonage, (Monday morning for instance,) as it brings regularity into the system, and leads the poor to the weekly saving of a certain sum, which is of great advantage. It would be too much to insist on their bringing it every week; but those who could not conveniently do so, knowing the rule, would calculate accordingly, and keep it up at the ratio of 1*d.* or 2*d.* per week, whether weekly or monthly. A book should be kept for the registering of names and deposits, and some addition promised to the sum saved, according to ability and circumstances. This promise would act as an encouragement to frugality and industry. A *fixed* addition is perhaps preferable to one varying according to the ratio of the deposit.

for the comfort of the poor, the prevalence of imposition (which, however, a frequent repetition of our visits will often enable us to detect) must be borne in mind. But even here there will be need of caution for ourselves, lest, in our desire to discountenance the imposing and undeserving, an undue dread of deception paralyze the hand of charity, and lessen the delight of laying ourselves out for the good of our people.

It will be important, in visiting the poor, to avoid, as far as possible, encroaching on the necessary occupations of families and individuals, and, for this reason, to ascertain the time (usually the afternoon or evening) when visits are most acceptable, and least likely to interfere with domestic and other duties.

Although the Clergyman's wife will generally enter, as opportunity occurs, every house in the parish, yet she

will seldom, on the first outset, attempt to force herself upon those who shew a decided aversion to her visits. She will rather seek to win them by the kindness of her demeanour, and by the expression of her readiness to assist and serve them as their circumstances may require. In cases of opposition and insult, she will have frequent need to remember her Master's patient and loving spirit, to enable her to return good for evil. She will find it most important to improve suitable opportunities to lessen and remove prejudice and unkindly feelings, and to instil the principles of the Gospel rather by affectionate admonition and advice, than by open reproof or harshness. "The servant of the Lord," we are taught, "must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."* This is,

* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

perhaps, one of the most difficult parts of our duty. To instruct the willing and docile is an easy and delightful task ; but when, as is too often the case, the mind is alienated from receiving the truth, and there exists a prejudice against instruction, no little forbearance and wisdom will be required to soften the feelings, to melt the hard heart by love and gentleness, to shame, if possible, the obstinate and self-willed into an acquiescence in plans proposed for their real benefit. Severity, in such cases, will seldom be found to effect the desired object. It will rather tend to irritate those very feelings which it is so desirable to allay. Our great aim should be, mildly but firmly to represent to them the awful guilt and folly of their conduct, as ungrateful to their Heavenly Father, despising the love of their Divine Saviour, resisting the strivings of the Holy Spirit within them, destroying every hope of

present happiness, and bringing eternal ruin upon their immortal souls. These solemn views, mingled with tender and earnest entreaties to consider their ways, and to embrace the free and gracious offers of the Gospel, will tend to convince them, that, in seeking to direct their attention to these important subjects, we are actuated by disinterested motives, and by a sincere desire to promote their everlasting welfare. Occasional distribution of temporal aid may, in certain cases, assist to open the hearts of the poor to our instruction; for though they cannot comprehend the value of Christian exhortations, they can understand the benefit of temporal relief, and will be more disposed to lend a willing ear to our spiritual counsels, if they find us ready to commiserate their bodily wants.

In a word, let the Clergyman's wife seek to 'become all things to all men.' Let her adopt every method to win

the affections of her husband's people, and to open their hearts for the reception of those Divine truths which he is from time to time delivering from the pulpit.

Let her keep the example of her Saviour, whose instructions were ever characterized by tenderness and love, constantly before her eyes, as she steers her course through the wide ocean of life. When adverse winds arise and tempests blow, let her recollect, that Jesus her Saviour stands at the helm of her vessel, to guide, direct, and console her ; that He, who has hitherto helped her, and in whose cause she has embarked, will come to her aid in the moment of extremity, and accomplish his will in her, and glorify his own great name.

CHAP. II.

VISITS TO THE SICK.

MATT. XXV. 36.—“I was sick, and ye visited me.”

THE subordinate visitation of the sick forms a primary part of the responsibility devolving upon the Minister's wife. It is more particularly her province to inquire into the cases of the sick, the extent of their ailments, and their need of medical assistance. She will advise the parish doctor to be sent for in emergencies ; while, in ordinary cases, a little experience and observation will enable her to prescribe simple and effectual remedies.*

* “If there be any of the Parson's flock sick, he is their physician, or *at least his wife* ; of whom, instead of the qualities of the world, he asks no other, but to have

The Clergyman's wife will find a little knowledge of medicine of material use to her, more particularly in a country village, where medical aid can only be procured from a distance. Sudden attacks of illness and accidents not unfrequently occur, which may become dangerous before a doctor can arrive, without the immediate application of proper remedies. The poor have generally so little conception of the requisite treatment in cases of sickness, that medical assistance is often frustrated by the previous use of most unsuitable means; while, on the other hand, prompt attention and judicious the skill of healing a wound, or helping the sick."—*Herbert's Country Parson.*

"Reece's Medical Guide" will be found an excellent directory to the Clergyman's wife. "Bickersteth's Medical Hints" might be likewise mentioned as remarkably safe for inexperienced persons. The consulting of these volumes, from time to time, will easily enable her to give advice in slight indispositions, with great advantage to her own influence among the poor. She may also find some useful practical hints in a little volume entitled "Cottage Comforts."

counsel have often proved most serviceable subsidiaries to the prescriptions of the parish doctor. In all cases, we must enforce the paramount importance of cleanliness and fresh air in the sick-chamber; and, in fevers, or other contagious diseases, advise that the children be kept away from the patient as much as possible. If the cottage is too small to afford another sleeping apartment, beds might be contrived for the little ones upon the ground-floor, and thus contact with the invalid be prevented.*

* The poor are never overstocked with linen, and, as frequent change is especially necessary in seasons of illness, the poor's room of the parsonage should, if possible, be furnished with a supply to lend on any emergency. The loan of sheets and necessary linen will be peculiarly acceptable to the poor at such seasons. No definite time can be fixed for their return. It should be understood that as soon as the patient is able to sit up, the bundles must be brought back in good order, nicely washed and repaired. If sent to an infectious house, they should, upon their return, be washed again, and exposed to the sun and air. Too much precaution cannot be used in fevers, &c. It

The wife of the Christian Minister is, indeed, well aware that the spiritual care of the parish, more particularly perhaps in times of sickness, devolves upon her husband; nor would she stir a step beyond the bounds of her own department of duty: yet will she desire to intermingle such spiritual instruction with her inquiries respecting bodily health, as may make the present moment a sanctified season both to the patient and the afflicted family.

Let her first great aim be, by tenderness and sympathy, to gain the affections of the sick, and thus to con-

might operate as a check to the family to whom the linen is lent, as well as be an advantage to the invalid, if one of the family came regularly to the parsonage about once a week to report the state of the patient, and to receive any temporal relief. If the linen should be returned in good order on the invalid's recovery, some little article of clothing might be given by way of receipt.

As no cottages have bells, a hand-bell is sometimes a comfort to an invalid, which might be sent and returned with the linen. A bed-rest and slipper-bath might also be kept at the parsonage, ready to lend, if required.

ciliate their regard, or at least their attention, to her most important object—the concerns of their immortal souls. Promises of temporal relief, which might operate as a temptation to hypocrisy, had better be avoided; nor should any distinction be made in cases of sickness and affliction, where the moral character is good.

It is scarcely necessary to advert to times of women's confinement as affording to the Minister's wife special opportunities of instruction. The imminent peril of the season naturally leads us to bring before them the nearness of eternity—searching inquiries, relative to their spiritual state—the infinite moment of preparation for the great change, and the free and open way of immediate acceptance with God. The prospect of the suffering at the crisis would suggest the blessed privilege of having 'God as a present help in trouble.' The importance and responsibility

attached to the new and endearing ties about to be formed, might also supply interesting subjects for conversation and instruction. When the eventful season is past, delightful will it be to endeavour to lift up the mother's heart in gratitude to that God whose power and goodness have been so eminently displayed in her deliverance. Nor should we forget to remind her of her temporal mercies in this hour of trial; the kind and skilful medical attendance; a bed to lie upon; articles of clothing for herself and her infant, and friends to assist and nurse her; whilst others may have been left, under the same circumstances, totally destitute. It is grace, free unmerited grace alone, that has made *her* to differ even in these temporal comforts; and, therefore, to God let all the praise and glory be given. The language of her heart should be, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who redeemeth thy life from

destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.”*

* The Clergyman's wife should keep several sets of childbed linen for the use of the poor women in the parish during the month of their confinement. Any poor woman wishing for the loan of a bundle should, on previous application to her, receive a ticket containing a memorandum to that effect, which she should send in exchange for the bundle at the time of her confinement. Each bundle should contain a card with a list of the articles lent, a paper of groats, a hand-bell, half a pound of soap, and a bottle of castor oil; the proper doses for both mother and infant might be marked on the latter. A yard and a half of flannel sent with the bundle would be an acceptable present, together with a tract entitled "To a Mother on the Birth of her Child," No. 195 of the Religious Tract Society, and sold at 1s. 4d. per hundred. The bundle should be returned punctually one month from the time of its being lent out, and every article should be washed clean, and mended if necessary. It will, however, be a good plan to place the childbed sets and sheets, on their return, within a moderately warm oven, and allow them to remain there one night. Every poor woman who returns her bundle in good order at the exact time, might receive a little night-cap, or frock, or some other article of clothing, in token of approbation for her honesty and cleanliness.

In towns or *large* villages, ladies would probably be found who would willingly co-operate with the Clergyman's wife in this labour of love.

Instruction upon the sacred ordinance of baptism, its privileges and responsibilities, the obligation of selecting suitable sponsors, and the necessity of prayer and faith in dedicating the new-born infant to the service of its God and Saviour, will form important and interesting topics for the Minister's wife to dwell upon. If, indeed, they do not seem to fall immediately within her province, a few practical hints, in the course of her visits, will be highly valuable, as preparatory to her husband's more full and definite instructions. She may remind the mother of the great honour of being intrusted with an immortal being to train and rear for the kingdom of heaven, and encourage her to a zealous performance of this duty by a recollection of the covenant mercies of God in Christ Jesus. She will set before her the fearful guilt of neglecting so responsible a trust, and excite her, if

possible, to a diligent fulfilment of the task, by a repetition of the precious promises which the Gospel unfolds to every true believer.*

In addition to those suffering under sickness, the aged and infirm, who, from advanced years or bodily weakness, are unable to attend church, will be objects of attention to the Clergyman's wife. Many cases of pitiable ignorance among this class will call forth her interest, exertions, and prayers. With her Bible in her hand, she will sit by the tottering father of the village, and, by patient compassionate instruction, seek to open his mind to a sense of his lost estate. By a few plain and simple passages of Scripture, explained and

* A little work entitled "Four Dialogues on Baptism, by a Country Clergyman," (published by Hatchard and Son, 3s. 6d. per dozen,) might be lent by the Clergyman's wife a fortnight or so previous to the time of the poor woman's coming to church. A perusal of this tract, with her simple explanations, would prepare the way for the Minister's instructions relative to the public ordinance.

brought home to his conscience, she will, from time to time, endeavour to bring him, though at the eleventh hour, to some knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; with a secret prayer that God may be pleased to melt his heart under the influence of Divine grace, and make him, from “a stranger and foreigner, a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.”

There is another class to whom the Minister's wife will feel herself bound by a peculiar tie, in the hour of sickness. These are her Sunday-school scholars, or those young persons who have shared her religious instructions. Not unfrequently does it please God that the sudden hand of fell disease should arrest the blooming and the young; not unfrequently are those very individuals in whom our fondest hopes were placed, and whom we had regarded as buds of greatest promise, snatched away in the vigour of youthful loveliness, as though

to remind survivors that "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." When such circumstances occur in the parish, the Clergyman's wife will earnestly seek to make them seasons of profitable instruction to all parties. She will, in the first place, regard it as a paramount duty to pay frequent visits to the sick child, in the character of an affectionate instructor and sympathizing friend, anxious both to administer relief to her sufferings, and to prepare her mind, under the Divine blessing, for the approaching conflict. She will speak to her of the love of that Saviour, who, when on earth, said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" and who now sits at the right hand of God, interceding for those who long to be numbered among the lambs of his flock. She will speak to her of the sinfulness of her heart, and of her deep need of a Saviour's blood to wash awa

all its stains. She will read to her, encourage, warn, direct, console her, as circumstances may require ; nor will she forget to remind her of the lessons and admonitions she has formerly received. Even the hymns that she had so often learnt in times of health may be suggested, to bring to her remembrance, should she be in a Christian frame, those everlasting songs of praise which are sung by the redeemed of the Lord in his heavenly temple. Thither must her heart and thoughts be constantly directed, having "Christ in her the hope of glory." Her removal in the morning of life, should it be God's will to take her hence, will afford an important occasion for reminding her young survivors of the uncertainty of life ; of the necessity of preparation for death ; and of the unspeakable happiness of having God for their friend—the Lord Jehovah for their strength and salvation.

Finally, let the Clergyman's wife allow nothing connected with the spiritual or temporal interests of her poor neighbours to be neglected. In *health*, let her strive to administer to their comforts, and to direct their attention to subjects connected with their everlasting happiness. In *sickness*, let her endeavour, by tenderness and sympathy, to mitigate their sufferings, and to shew forth religion in all its loveliness, as the only source of consolation on a dying-bed. In short, let her aim at all times, and in all circumstances, to follow the example of her blessed Lord, of whom it is said, that 'He went about doing good.'

CHAP. III.

SCHOOLS.

MATT. xviii. 14.—“ It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”

IF there be one department of usefulness, which devolves more peculiarly than another upon the Clergyman's wife, it is the religious instruction of the young, more especially the females, among her husband's flock.

Youth is a grand crisis in life ; early impressions are the most vivid and durable ; conscience is not as yet inured to the resistance of conviction : and, therefore, upon the right improvement of this momentous era greatly depends, under the Divine blessing, the temporal and eternal happiness of the rising generation.

The natural dictate of the benevolent heart, uninfluenced by religious motives, would dispose it to succour and instruct the ignorant and helpless. The natural feelings of sympathy and compassion would lead us to employ many a vigorous effort in promoting the well-being of those whom Providence had placed under our care. But how infinitely is the motive heightened, and the importance of the duty enhanced, when it springs from *Christian* principle! When the follower of Jesus appeals to her Bible, she finds the sacred volume itself both establishing the necessity, and supplying the motives, for active benevolence in the service of her Lord. The gracious displays of Divine love there presented to her view, form at once an encouragement and a stimulus to exertion. She cannot believe that her Saviour himself delights to see the lambs of his flock gathered into his fold, without

using her utmost endeavours, in dependence on his grace, that not "one of these little ones should perish." She cannot reflect upon the tenderness and compassion with which her gracious Redeemer when on earth folded the infants in his arms and blessed them, without feeling a strong desire to be made the honoured instrument of leading many a young heart to a knowledge of Him, in all his varied attributes of mercy, love and goodness, "whom to know is life eternal."

Supposing these motives to have their due influence in the bosom of the Christian Minister's wife, her attention will in the first place, probably, be directed to the superintendence and management of the Sunday-school, as the most important medium of instruction. The care of the boys will devolve upon her husband, or the teachers appointed by him, whilst that of the girls rests with her.

“ In the constitution of the school,” remarks Mr. Bridges, “ the course of instruction must be adapted to the taste and capacities of the children—varying from the first rudiments to the highest parts of the system ; but ever keeping the main object in view—the intelligent and saving knowledge of the Scriptures. No satisfactory advance can be made towards this object by the mere repetition even of Scriptural lessons, however well-selected and arranged. For if the memories of children be stored with doctrines and precepts, while the intelligent powers remain wholly dormant, no interest can be excited—no permanent impression made.”*

When the children are assembled together on the Sunday morning, either in the rectory kitchen, the school-room, or any other suitable place, the

* See the “ Rev. C. Bridges’s Christian Ministry,” Part v., chap. 4, to which work the writer is indebted for most of the “ Hints ” contained in this chapter.

Collects or Epistles of the day might in the first place be repeated and explained. One or more chapters of the Bible should then be read, verse by verse in rotation, full explanations given, and the children questioned both with and without their Bibles upon the chapters they have just been reading, until the truths they contain are fully imprinted on their memories. Nor is this all. The reading-lessons should be selected from the simplest parts of Scripture (particularly if the children be young), from the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the narrative parts of the Gospels; and a clear and interesting view of Christian doctrine should be from time to time drawn from them, and impressed as far as possible, under Divine grace, on the minds and consciences of the children. The chapters, with their applications and inferences, should have been previously selected and prepared, as the

interest and success of this mode of teaching greatly depend upon the continuity of the course being preserved by the reading and explanatory instructions of successive Sundays.

About one hour might be occupied in this manner. The children might then be questioned upon the last Sunday's sermons, &c. The following plan might be found useful for an elder class, previous to the conclusion of the school. After the usual reading of the Scriptures, with the statement of the leading doctrines and duties contained in the portion of the Gospel, or deduced from it, let the children (as many as are of a sufficient age) be desired to bring Scripture answers and parallel texts, in illustration of those doctrines and duties, on the following Sunday. For instance: let us begin with inquiring, What is the natural state of the human heart? The children will search their Bibles on their return

home, and reply, in answer to the question again repeated at their next meeting, "The heart is deceitful above all things," &c., Jer. xvii. 9. "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart," &c., Gen. vi. 5. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c., Matt. xv. 19; or other texts of a similar nature.

Then explain to them that Adam's fall was the cause of this universal depravity. This they will prove, on the following Sunday, by adducing Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 22, &c. We should then tell them that a remedy for our sins has been provided in Christ Jesus. They will repeat, on the ensuing Sunday, John iii. 16; Rom. iii. 23, 26, &c. We might next shew them that Jesus Christ is the *only* way of salvation. They will refer the following week, in proof of this, to John xiv. 6; Acts iv. 12, &c. Inquire of them what He has done to accomplish

our salvation. They will refer, on the next Sunday, to Phil. ii. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xv. 4; Heb. ix. 24, &c. Desire them to enumerate the positive blessings bestowed upon believers through his mediation. They will mention Scriptural proofs to shew that we obtain eternal life, Rom. vi. 23; forgiveness of sins, Acts xiii. 38; Col. i. 14. Adoption of sons, Ephes. i. 5; and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus iii. 5, 6.

Then desire them to bring Scriptural proofs of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit; of faith, as the means of obtaining an interest in the blessings of the Gospel; of the manner in which faith is produced in the heart; of the eternal happiness that awaits all true believers, &c.

This course of instruction will occupy ten or twelve Sundays, and it may be gone through a second and a third time with profit, the children being

desired to find parallel texts and verses, in reply to subsidiary questions from the teacher. This mode of oral instruction improves by practice; and, although it may appear slow, has many advantages attending it. Children thus accustomed to "search the Scriptures," shortly acquire a surprising facility in turning to appropriate texts on any given subject; the habit of attention is fixed, and an acquaintance with the beauty and harmony of the sacred volume promoted, by the connexion between the lessons of successive Sundays.

A course of questions might be similarly formed upon the principal histories of the Bible, or the life, miracles, and parables of Christ.* The duties of the moral law might also be

* Those who are unaccustomed to this plan of teaching will find a valuable assistant in "Judson's Scripture Questions on the Life and Parables of Christ," in two small volumes, published by the Religious Tract Society.

profitably impressed upon the minds of children, by causing them to commit to memory select passages from Scripture relative to the several parts of this wide but important subject. Dr. Chalmers's little work, entitled "Scripture References," will be found useful for this purpose; and by carrying on the order of the references from week to week, a regular series of Scriptural examination will be pursued, the subjects of which will be urged by an intelligent teacher on the attention and consciences of the children.*

The school might conclude with the repetition of the Church Catechism, accompanied with questions and ex-

* The writer may, perhaps, be thought to dwell too minutely on some points relative to the routine of the school, &c. Let it, however, be recollected, that these "Hints" are designed for those who are just entering, or who have recently entered, on this field of usefulness, and for those whose local circumstances may have prevented their acquiring much practical experience in the management of a Sunday school.

planations, the singing of a hymn,* and prayer.

Throughout the whole routine of the Sunday school, it is of great importance, though a matter of no small difficulty, to impress upon the minds of the children the grand object of our instruction. It is the want of this perception which produces that painful exhibition of listlessness and indifference, even when we are bringing before them subjects the most solemn and endearing. Let us endeavour to shew them that our *primary object* is not the mechanical purpose of teaching them to read,—not merely to induce a habit of outward decency and reformation; but to make them sensible of their lost condition as ‘children of wrath,’—their need of a Saviour to

* Many hymns in the “Cottage Hymn Book” will be found appropriate: “Watts’s Hymns for Children,” and the “Sunday School Union Hymn Book,” are also most suitable for the purpose.

cleanse them from their sins, and of the Holy Spirit to renew their nature, instruct their hearts, and fit them for heaven. Let us endeavour to set before them, in the form best adapted to their capacities, the love of the Saviour, and the fulness of his salvation. From these principles alone shall we be able effectually to inculcate the fear and love of God, obedience to parents, steadiness of deportment, and all those relative duties to God and man, in which it is our Father's will that they should walk, and in which they will find solid and lasting happiness. It is obviously important that these subjects should be introduced to them in the most attractive light. Care must be taken not to weary their minds by a monotonous seriousness. By giving our instructions in a lively tone, with simple statements, close application, and an affectionate mode of address, we may best hope to gain a

fix their attention, and under the Divine blessing to win their souls to Christ.

The various demands upon the time and strength of the Minister's wife (especially if she be surrounded by a young family) do not always allow of her personal superintendence in the Sunday school. This indeed is the case in the large majority of instances. The school will probably require the division and subdivision of classes, which must be supplied with teachers, selected and trained by herself, and taught to act solely under her direction.

The selection and instruction of the teachers is a point of no small importance. In many parishes it may be found necessary to choose them, or some of them at least, from the elder class, or from young persons who have left the school; in others, however, pious young females, rather above the

level of ordinary Sunday-school children, (the daughters of farmers or respectable trades-people), might, if solicited, gladly render their services in this labour of love, and would naturally command more authority and respect than those who were formerly scholars themselves.

The Minister's wife should make a point of assembling these young people together at stated periods, to examine into their respective attainments, to catechise them in various parts of the Scriptures, to encourage them in their work, and to remind them of their constant need of Divine grace to enable them to overcome the difficulties of the employ, and to enjoy its privileges.

It will be important also to furnish them with suitable books for their own improvement, and in every way, as far as in us lies, to call out their best energies in this most responsible undertaking, ever encouraging them with

the assurance that their work of faith and labour of love shall not be 'in vain in the Lord.'* In our meetings with the young teachers, nothing of a compulsory nature should be attempted. They might be led to find parallel proofs or illustrations of various portions of Scripture, in the manner that has been recommended above for the younger children, or to seek for some of the most striking prophecies in the Old Testament, and compare them with their fulfilment in the New. This will be found a useful method of promoting their acquaintance with the truths of Scripture, of impressing upon their minds its important doctrines, and of facilitating the instructions they are themselves called to give upon the Sunday.

* The following works will furnish valuable information to the Sunday-school teacher:—"The Bible Teacher's Manual,"—(Holdsworth and Ball); "A Help to the Study of the Gospels,"—(Nisbet); "Bickersteth's Scripture Help," (Seeley,) &c.

But little, perhaps, can be said on the subject of *Weekly Schools*, because the systems adopted in different parishes must depend so much upon local circumstances. The national system of instruction is now so well known, and so generally acted upon, that it is scarcely necessary to particularize it. The care of the girls' weekly school will naturally devolve upon the Clergyman's wife, and she should make it her endeavour either in re-modelling a long-established school, or in instituting a new one, to form such a plan as will be best calculated to suit the children of the parish. With this view, let her endeavour to acquaint herself with their ages, their capacities, their previous attainments, and their respective dispositions; to fix such hours for attendance as are most fr

interruption; and to procure a mistress upon whose piety, firmness, judgment, regularity, and probity, she can fully rely, and who will seek to gain the obedience of the children under her care by affection and kindness, rather than by a harsher mode of treatment. She will propose rewards to those who do well, rather than to those who do better than others, avoiding that emulation which is awakened by competition. She will strive to distribute them in the most impartial manner, so that the children may feel them to depend entirely on their own behaviour and exertions. Great order ought to be maintained in the school, though the occupations should be frequently varied to keep up attention and interest. The children should be made thoroughly to understand what they learn or read, and be questioned upon it from time to time. Nothing, however trivial it may appear, should be

allowed to pass unnoticed. Above all, their religious instruction should be made the object of pre-eminent importance; and the plan already mentioned, in reference to the Sunday school, might, with various modifications, be rendered equally useful in the weekly school. Reading, writing, and accounts, are, perhaps, the only branches of education absolutely necessary for children in the lower classes of life. Some attention, however, in the girls' school, should be paid to the use of the needle. Plain work, knitting, and the arts of mending and darning, are frequently too much neglected, although they are of great importance in enabling the children to assist their mothers, either in making or repairing their own clothes, or those belonging to the younger members of the family. Particular regard should be paid to needlework in the lace-making districts, as the children are usually set to their

lace-pillows as soon as they have left the school; and, from their ignorance of the use of the needle, many difficulties and inconveniences will occur in future life.

The importance of the *Infant-School* system, under Christian superintendence and direction, is now so generally acknowledged, that little need be said in reference to it. The Clergyman's wife should consider her infant school as a *nursery* for the Sunday and weekly schools; and the children should be removed from the one to the other as soon as they arrive at an age to require a stricter mode of discipline, and closer habits of application.

The blending of instruction, discipline and amusement, is the principal object of the infant school. It pro-

vides a safe and suitable superintendence for those little creatures, who, from unavoidable hindrances, would either run wild in the streets, or remain neglected at home. It is a highly important means of instilling the simple principles of religion into the infant mind.

An *Adult School* is a most valuable addition to a parish, particularly in a manufacturing, straw-platting, or lace-making district. It may be attended with more fatigue, perhaps, to the Minister's wife (if under her own superintendence) than the schools designed merely for children, as persons in middle or advanced life are not so apt to learn as the young. But should she, after the labour of many months, enjoy the satisfaction of seeing some aged

widow take out her spectacles, and turn to her Bible, acknowledging, with a smile of gratitude, that it is to *her* unwearied endeavours she is indebted for an acquaintance with God's Word,—that, by reading that blessed book, she has been brought, under Divine grace, to a deep conviction of her own sinfulness, and of her need of a Saviour,—that she has there discovered Jesus to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that her heart is now filled with peace and joy in believing,—surely such an acknowledgment (and there are doubtless many such from those who had been hitherto strangers Zion-wards) would afford an ample recompence, even to to her most assiduous exertions.

The adult school should be open to all the females of the parish. Mothers of families, especially those who have been formerly scholars in the Sunday school, and who have probably no other means of keeping up the know-

ledge there acquired, should be invited to attend. The time should be fixed at the most convenient hour possible. This may vary with the seasons of the year, according to circumstances. During harvest time, or when the long days allow of protracted labour in the field, the school might be closed altogether, and opened again as soon as expedient.*

It is frequently the case, particularly in a country parish, that there are but few adults anxious or even willing to receive instruction. Some will plead the care of their families; others are deterred by a sense of shame, springing from conscious ignorance. If only

* The writer is acquainted with one parish in which the school was usually opened at six o'clock in the evening, except during harvest time, when it was discontinued, as the farmers could not spare the young women before eight. So earnestly desirous were they, however, to receive instruction, that they begged to be allowed to meet from five to six o'clock in the morning, (previous to the commencement of their field labours,) and this they regularly did.

three or four individuals, however, assemble, let the motive above stated stimulate the Minister's wife to use her best exertions on their behalf. If there are a sufficient number collected, it will be advisable to form them into classes according to the progress they have respectively made. The upper classes, consisting of those who have made the greatest proficiency, might employ the first part of their time in reading the Testament, and finding texts in reply to Scriptural questions arising out of their reading; the lower classes might read the Psalter or spelling-book, while the first class was otherwise engaged.* Such a portion of time as is considered desirable may then be devoted to writing and arithmetic; a hymn or psalm may be sung, and the school closed with prayer.

* The "Bristol Adult Spelling-Book" will be found particularly useful for this purpose.

But to conclude this already extended chapter. The task of instruction, or even the superintendence of the instructors, may become irksome; discouragements must be anticipated, and where a happy result was expected, disappointments may occasionally occur. The truly conscientious female will not, however, allow these obstacles to baffle her pious endeavours, or to deter her from the quiet and happy paths of Christian perseverance. Let her go on in simple dependence on the promises of God, and “the joy of the Lord will be her strength.”* She will find an ample reward in her work, because “the love of Christ constraineth her.”† Her ability for acting will gain ground with her exertions, whilst the sense of

* Neh. viii. 10.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

her own unworthiness will proportionably increase. The charm of novelty may indeed wear off ; yet her heart will cling with a permanent attachment to the engagement, because she delights, under the Divine blessing, to be the honoured instrument of bringing some of her fellow-creatures to a saving acquaintance with, and an interest in, the all-important truths of the Gospel.

CHAP. IV.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG, INDEPENDENTLY OF THE SCHOOLS.

DEUT. xi. 19.—“And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

THE Clergyman's wife, who is truly anxious to fulfil the duties of her station, will feel interested in the well-being of every individual in her husband's parish. That she may not, however, overstep the bounds of her own department of exertion, she will pay a more exclusive attention to the *female* part of it, considering both their temporal wants and their religious instruction as more immediately devolving upon her. It will be impor-

tant for her, if possible, to take cognizance, in some way or other, of all the *young* females in the parish. Many of them, in attending her Sunday or Weekly Schools, will become the recipients of her religious instructions; but there will be others who greatly need her counsel and kind admonitions, whose age or employments do not allow of their attendance. Farmers' or trades-people's servant girls, young women who have left the Sunday school, and who either have or have not any immediate thought of service, and young married women, are comprehended in this class.

All plans for the Christian instruction of servants must be grounded upon the recollection that their time belongs to their employers. It may often, therefore, be necessary to impress masters and mistresses with a just sense of the responsible trust of immortal souls, and of the solemn

account that will be required of them.* In devising any scheme for the instruction of servants, all interference with their necessary duties, and all occasions of evil, must be carefully avoided. If, however, their employers were favourably disposed, they might doubtless spare their servants for an hour or two on a week-day evening, if it were only once a fortnight, or even monthly, to assemble together in the kitchen of the parsonage for the perusal of God's Holy Word, and examination as to their respective knowledge of its contents.† These seasons,

* See Eph. vi. 9. Col. iv. 1.

† There are many hindrances in agricultural parishes to servants being permitted to come out of an evening:—contact with the village idlers, and temptations to idleness among themselves, are plausible, and in many cases, well-grounded objections. In towns, these objections would often be insurmountable. Perhaps some few might be collected together half an hour before the afternoon service on Sunday; or casual intercourse with them might be obtained in calling on their mistresses, provided they give permission. Books might also be lent to them, (if they can read,)—the “Friendly Visitor,” “Cottage Magazine,” &c.

though primarily devoted to Scriptural instruction, should (in order to render them interesting and profitable) be improved for friendly counsel, adapted to their individual situations. The great principle of moral character, and of faithful service, must be impressed upon their minds—an earnest desire and endeavour to act according to the will of God. They must be reminded that, if they would be truly happy, they must do all “as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”* The source of their dissatisfaction or ill behaviour in their respective situations, must be traced to a want of subordination to the will of God, and to a neglect of the Gospel of Christ. Constant and earnest prayer, therefore, together with a daily perusal of the Holy Scriptures, should be urged upon

* Eph. vi. 5, 6.

them as the appointed means of becoming acquainted with the Divine will, and “adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.”*

Respectable young females, from the age of fifteen to eighteen or nineteen, who have left the Sunday school, might be invited to join these little classes of servant girls.† In addition to the occasional meetings above alluded to, the Clergyman’s wife should endeavour, by frequent and affectionate intercourse with them, to maintain an influence upon their minds. She might, if expedient, employ them occasionally at her own house; or, at all events, interest herself about their

* Titus ii. 10.

† Mrs. Hoare’s “Friendly Hints to Servants,” Mrs. Taylor’s “Present of a Mistress to a Young Servant,” “History of a Servant Maid,” and “The History of Mary Wilson,” — (Nisbet, or Hamilton,) will be useful books to give or lend to either of these classes. Other works of a religious nature, such as, “Doddridge’s Rise and Progress,” “Scudder’s Christian’s Daily Walk,” &c., might probably be procured from the parochial library.

temporal concerns at home. Many amongst them in the course of time will probably be seeking situations at service. She will then take pains to obtain places for them in serious and respectable families, and manifest a kind interest in their welfare, by making inquiries respecting them of their masters and mistresses, and inviting them to visit her when they return home to their friends. A small reward to those who remain at service in their first place for one year, and are able at its expiration to bring a good character from their mistress, has been found useful in many instances, both as an encouragement to the individuals themselves, and a stimulus to others.*

* Circumstances vary so much in different places, that the plans here recommended will probably require many modifications ere they can be adopted. It will be recollected that only "Hints" are given. The writer is acquainted with one parish in which the young women of a certain age and description, some of them former

It is an object of no small importance and anxiety to the Clergyman's wife, to continue her religious instruction to young *married* women who have been in the Sunday school, &c., previous to their marriage. The Christian principles that were inculcated at the Sunday school, must now be applied to their new and most responsible obligations. Let them be shewn the necessity and privilege of performing all their relative duties upon the motives of the Gospel.* Let them be directed, under the influence of these motives, to "walk in their house in

Sunday-school scholars, and others of a station rather superior to the Sunday-school girls, are invited to tea at the rectory once every fortnight, for the purpose of Scriptural instruction. They are divided into Bible classes, according to their respective age and abilities. A hymn is afterwards sung, and the Minister himself concludes the little meeting with prayer. If expedient, and the time admitted of more than reading, catechising, &c., the young women thus collected might be employed in working for the poor, while one of the number read aloud some useful book.

* Eph. v. 22—24, 33. Col. iii. 18. 1 Pet. iii. 1—6.

a perfect way with a perfect heart.”* Let them be warned lest domestic cares and pleasures hinder their spiritual growth.† Let conversation with them upon “the things that belong to their peace” be encouraged in the most confidential way. If practicable, they might be assembled at the parsonage at stated periods, for Scriptural instruction, and useful advice as to their individual duties.

At the solemn and interesting seasons of Confirmation, or in reference to the admission of young persons to the Lord’s table, the assistance of the Clergyman’s wife may also be of considerable importance. The more regular and systematic examination of the candidates, will of course devolve upon the Minister. But in cases where female bashfulness and timidity often operate as a bar to confidence, the

* Psalm ci. 2.

† Mark iv. 7—19. 1 Cor. vii. 34.

maternal and affectionate instruction of his wife may be most serviceable. Her great object at these times will be, by private and personal intercourse, to gain the confidence of the young people, (more especially of the females,) as the means of impressing upon them the great and solemn vows which they are about to undertake, and of encouraging them to the high and holy privilege of unreserved dedication. Female timidity needs peculiar tenderness and consideration. Any public catechising is naturally formidable. Much more, therefore, may frequently be done by the kind encouragement and private instruction of the Minister's wife, than by her husband's public exercises. Nor is this the only advantage attending her exertions. The Clergyman will, through her medium, obtain a better acquaintance with the state of mind which exists among his female candidates, and be better

enabled to adapt his instructions to their circumstances.* In this case, therefore, as in others before mentioned, the Clergyman's wife, without obtruding herself on the duties which belong to the Minister of Christ, will become a fellow-helper to the Gospel;—in the highest sense of the term, a help-meet to her husband.

There is yet another mode of Christian instruction, which the writer has known to be useful not only to the catechumens themselves, but to their parents and friends. In her visits to the different cottages, the Clergyman's wife might, after the usual inquiries as to the welfare of the family, &c., assemble together indiscriminately the children who happen to be at

* "The women should be allowed freely to open their griefs to the Minister's wife, who, acquainting her husband with convenient intimations thereof, should occasion him, in his public ministry, more *particularly* and profitably to discourse on those things which are of everlasting benefit."—*Mather's New England*.

home, make them stand around her either with or without their Bibles, and then question them, in the presence of their mothers, upon the things they have learned at school, the catechism, the historical parts of the Old and New Testament, &c. She may also desire them to select, or repeat to her, texts upon any given subject:—the love of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners,*—the duty of believing in Jesus Christ,—the need of the Holy Spirit to change their hearts,—the happiness of seeking the Lord early,† and of keeping his commandments. She will naturally improve these opportunities to exhort them, in dependence on Divine grace, and from love to Christ, (for she must never deal with them upon other than

- “He who the infant soul would move,
Must make it feel that GOD IS LOVE.”

De Rance.

- † Prov. viii. 17.

Christian motives,) to shew good behaviour to all, attention to their learning, dutiful behaviour to their parents, and kindness and forbearance among their brothers and sisters. She will remind them that the eye of God is constantly upon them; that He is acquainted with all their thoughts and actions; and that the only way to obtain his favour is by his dear Son, Jesus Christ. She will tell them that the Bible not only presents many special promises to the young who love and serve God, but that it abounds also with numerous interesting examples of youthful dedication, (as Samuel, Josiah, Timothy, &c.,) all of which are recorded for their encouragement and instruction.*

* Mather gives the following advice, in his directions for pastoral visits, which, though addressed to the Minister himself, may, with various modifications, be equally applicable to his wife:—"If any with whom you should have spoken are absent, you may frequently leave one or two solemn texts of the sacred Scripture, which you

In this, and many other ways, the wife of the Christian Minister may labour for the good of her husband's flock. Discouragements may, and will,

may think most suitable for them; desiring some one present affectionately to remember you to them, and from you to recommend to them that oracle of God. You may then call for the children and servants, and, putting to them such questions of the catechism as you think fit, you may, from the answers, make lively applications to them for engaging them to the fear of God. You may frequently obtain from them promises relating to secret prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and obedience to their parents and masters. You may also frequently set before them the proposals of the New Covenant, after you have laboured for their conviction and awakening; till, with floods of tears, they expressly declare their consent to it, and their acceptance of it. Some of the younger people you may order to bring their Bibles, and read to you from thence two or three verses, to which you may direct them: this will try whether or not they can read well. You may then encourage them to think on such things as you remark from the passage, and never to forget those "faithful sayings" of God. You may sometimes leave with them some serious question, which you may tell them they shall not answer to you but to themselves; such as the following:—"What have I been doing ever since I came into the world, about the great errand upon which God has sent me into the world? If God should now call me out of the world, what would become of me throughout eternal ages?"—*Mather's Essays to do Good.*

indeed, perpetually arise from the petulant dispositions incident to youth, and from the ignorance and waywardness of their parents; but, without being too much disheartened by these difficulties, let her go cheerfully forwards in the path of duty, recollecting that where good seed is sown, the effect of it will be to introduce a better vegetation. It *may* please God so far to bless her own and her husband's endeavours, as to give them in due time the delight of seeing one blade spring up here, and another there; till, at length, the whole scene of their labours shall become, at least in some degree, changed from barrenness to fertility; and all around them shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

CHAP. V.

COTTAGE READINGS.

1 COR. x. 31.—“Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Who can read St. Paul's salutation to some of his female friends, without feeling a stimulus to imitate their example, and “go and do likewise?” He evidently singles out for especial notice those who were most active and zealous in good works: “Phebe, a succourer of many;” “Priscilla, his helper in Christ Jesus;” “Mary, who bestowed much labour on them;” “the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord.”* The peculiar departments in which they were called to labour are

* Rom. xvi. 2, 3, 6, 12. (Compare Phil. iv. 3.)

not specified; but all had, doubtless, one end in view, the dissemination of the knowledge of Christ in their respective spheres. Let the Christian Minister's wife seek to resemble these early converts. Let her gladly embrace every opportunity of encouraging and strengthening her husband's flock in the service of God; and rejoice to evince her own love to the Saviour, by the zeal and earnestness with which she devotes herself as a willing labourer in his vineyard.

Among the various modes by which she may materially assist her husband, and benefit his people, *Cottage Readings* deserve to be prominently mentioned. In many instances, these simple assemblies of the poor have been made eminently useful. Those whose feelings were cold and lifeless, have been softened and melted by the truths thus plainly brought home to their consciences. Those whose religion had never pene-

trated into the heart, but who were resting in outward forms and mere external profession, have been brought to a knowledge of the "truth as it is in Jesus," by the affectionate earnestness of the Minister's wife.

The following instance will illustrate the fact : — A lady furnished a poor family in her neighbourhood with a Bible. It was the first they ever possessed ; and it was hoped that great good would result from it. Accordingly, in the course of a week or two, she called to see what had become of the newly purchased volume. As she entered the room, she found a young person reading it ; and, after a few observations on the excellency of the Scriptures, she took the Bible in her own hand, and read the Psalm which begins with " Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered ; unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit

there is no guile." A thin boarded partition separated this family from several others; some of whom, hearing an unusual conversation, came in. Another and another followed, until seventeen persons were sitting or standing around her, listening to the words of eternal life. A delightful opportunity was thus afforded her; and it was not permitted to pass unimproved. She explained to them the nature of Divine forgiveness, and the only way in which it can be obtained; shewed them how desirable it is to possess this blessedness; and then pressed home to their consciences the important questions,—“Do *you* possess this blessedness? Do you see your need of it? Do you earnestly desire it?” At these solemn appeals one woman began to weep, and walked away. “Stop a few minutes,” said Mrs. ———, “stop. Remember that our Lord Jesus Christ shed tears over the sins of others; and it is no

disgrace for you to weep over your own sins. Come back, and hear more about it." The woman returned, and the subject was continued, until the place literally became a Bochim—a "place of weepers." Every one was in tears; and when she rose to go away, they asked her, with much solicitude, "When will you come to see us, and to read to us again?" She afterwards repeatedly visited this family, as well as that inhabiting the adjoining dwelling; and her Cottage Readings were blessed to the good of many individuals, two or three of whom thus listened, for the first time in their life, to the joyful sound—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

If only one in twenty of the disciples of Christ, were to evince an equal solicitude for the salvation of sinners, might not the wilderness soon be turned into a fruitful field?

Another delightful instance of the

efficacy of female reading is mentioned in the annals of the Ban de la Roche. That interesting but secluded spot became in a manner the cradle of Ladies' Bible Associations (soon after the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society in England), in consequence of a letter addressed by the venerable pastor Oberlin, to the committee of the Parent Society, relative to the labours of three disinterested females, Sophia Bernard, Maria Scheppler, and Catherine Scheidecker. So much encouraged had he been by their diligence in reading the sacred Scriptures among the poor of his villages, and in using various means for the dissemination of its contents, that he was led to request the Ban de la Roche might become a dépôt of the Society. The request was gladly and gratefully acceded to; and, through the agency of his female readers, the Holy Scriptures were circulated among all the

Protestants in his extensive parishes, as well as in the surrounding Roman Catholic villages.

But a few further remarks may be necessary to illustrate the advantage of Cottage Readings. When the Clergyman's wife surveys the extent of her husband's flock, she may perhaps feel discouraged in the outset, by the apparent difficulty of giving *individual* instruction to all who have a claim upon her attention and interest. In reading at particular cottages, the inhabitants of the neighbouring dwellings have no share in her instructions. It is far more economical and effectual, therefore, to assemble a few together for the important purpose of hearing the Word of God. This plan will especially include the aged and infirm, who are not able to walk to the house of God; or whose near approach to eternity calls for peculiar consideration. Young mothers also, who are often

prevented from a regular attendance upon public worship, should be particularly invited to attend this means of Christian instruction, more easy of access, and brought almost to their own doors. Nor need they be deterred from the fear of their children (if brought with them) proving an interruption. They may often be hushed to sleep; or, if they continue perseveringly restless, sitting near the door, an easy opportunity will be found to retire. If the noisy habits of their children should not allow them to be brought, they might be left at home under the care of an elder child or some kind neighbour, rather than the mother should be debarred from so valuable an opportunity of instruction.

That no individual may be prevented attending these little meetings from want of due notice, let the Clergyman's wife, when she is visiting her poor

neighbours, invite the females of the different families to meet her at whatever cottage she may select, on a given day, to hear the Scriptures read.* The hour of assembling should be fixed with all possible consideration of convenience to the poor; and, whatever self-denial it may cost the Clergyman's wife to leave her home, and break in on the quiet duties of domestic retirement, still she should regard the engagement as one of regular occurrence and of primary obligation.

The plan adopted at these readings should be very simple. When the little assembly are collected, a few moments might be spent in prayer for the Divine blessing on the service in which they are about to engage. A suitable

* In manufacturing districts (where there is no evening service) the Sunday evening may be found preferable to any other time, provided local or adventitious circumstances render it practicable. In the great majority of cases, however, women may be collected together on a week-day.

portion of Scripture might then be read, with occasional explanations and remarks. Sometimes a sermon upon any text that may have occurred in the reading, might follow the perusal of the Holy Scriptures; and the whole might be concluded with prayer. Burder's Village Sermons, Lavington's Sermons, Cooper's Sermons, Davy's Cottage Sermons, and Beddome's Discourses, (altered and varied by the reader according to circumstances,) are, perhaps, among the most suitable for Cottage Readings. Much of the interest and efficacy of these simple meetings will depend, under God, on the *manner* in which they are conducted. It should be familiar, affectionate, and instructive. A glance should be taken at the little audience; and such simple truths as are peculiarly adapted to strike the conscience of any individual present, which may be known, or partially so, from previous

acquaintance, should be particularly dwelt upon.

Some little difficulties, such as natural timidity, the fear of not making herself understood, &c., may for a time deter the Minister's wife from entering on this labour of love. But let the consciousness of weakness encourage a more simple dependence on Divine grace; and, in this spirit of humble faith, she will find that the talent of explaining Bible truths to the poor, like every other talent, becomes brighter by exercise, and that habit will render easy what at first appeared to be impracticable. And what, if but one ignorant sinner be awakened,—if but one heart be melted at the foot of the cross,—if but one soul be refreshed and cheered in its progress towards heaven by these Cottage Readings,—will it not prove an abundant recompence for all the labour or time devoted to the work? What cause for

rejoicing will it be, to have been counted worthy to bear even this humble part in spreading the knowledge of the glory of the Lord ! *

* "Care must be taken that attendance upon these meetings does not compensate for the self-indulgent neglect of the house of God." — *Bridges's Christian Ministry*. The writer trusts that this will be particularly borne in mind, and that, in inviting the poor to attend her Cottage Readings, the Clergyman's wife will never knowingly countenance the presence of any person who has *voluntarily* absented herself from church, under pretence of attending these meetings.

CHAP. VI.

PAROCHIAL LIBRARY, TRACTS, &c.

ECCLES. XI. 1.—“Cast thy bread upon the waters.”

IN a large majority of instances, the immediate care and management of the parochial Library devolves upon the parish school-master or mistress, or some other individual in the same rank of life, acting of course under the direction and occasional inspection of the Minister himself; but as local circumstances and numerous engagements may sometimes induce him to delegate this general superintendence and occasional inspection to his wife, a few hints will be given.

The following remarks, prefixed to the catalogue of the Yoxall parochial

Library, will furnish an appropriate introduction to this chapter. After speaking of the moral benefits arising from parish libraries, the writer of the article continues:—"Nor are the religious advantages arising from them less clear. The Bible, indeed, is **THE BOOK** which of itself constitutes the poor man's library; and, thanks be to God! there is no man, however poor, who in these times may not be in possession of a Bible. But while the Scriptures are the only foundation for religious knowledge and practice, and 'are able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,' there are yet many other books, which, through the Divine blessing, may be made profitable to them; which may assist them in understanding and applying the Scriptures, may aid their devotion, and promote in them spirituality of mind. The facility, therefore, which the

parochial Library affords of procuring such books, is a privilege, of which those persons who have not other means of obtaining them, may beneficially avail themselves. The Sunday is, or may be, for the most part, a season of leisure ; nor can those hours of the sacred day, which are not immediately devoted to the worship of God, be in general more profitably or consistently employed than in religious reading and study. And it is owing perhaps in part to the want of some little variety of books, which by diversifying the mode of information, might the more readily engage and interest the mind, that so many persons who are capable of reading, yet find the Sunday hang heavy on their hands, and waste so much of its precious time in listless and unprofitable idleness.

“ But it is in seasons of sickness and affliction, that the value of the parochial Library is principally to be seen.

At these seasons, persons are not unfrequently confined for days, perhaps for weeks, or even months, to the sick-chamber, or the fire-side, under circumstances the most favourable for the admission and improvement of religious impressions. At such times, then, the opportunity of procuring a supply of useful and interesting books may be of incalculable benefit to the invalid: since such a supply will not only tend to divert the mind, and to relieve the weariness occasioned by a lingering confinement, and a necessary cessation from ordinary occupations; but it may also lead, under the Divine blessing, to a most seasonable and profitable improvement of the dispensation itself. Such a dispensation is often blessed by God to spiritual good. It is an instrument which He employs for preparing the heart to receive the good seed; and, frequently, a religious book, which at other times has failed

of its object, has *then* found its way to the heart, and has awakened serious reflections, which have led to the most important results.

“Such are some of the *general* arguments in recommendation of parochial Libraries. But these arguments press with *particular* force at the present period; when the benefits of education are so much more widely diffused than formerly, and consequently the means of extending the advantages arising from these institutions are so greatly facilitated. The population, being now taught to read, will exercise their privilege; and, possessing this new source of information and amusement, will naturally make use of it. The providing them, therefore, with a supply of proper and useful books becomes, if not a point of Christian duty, yet at least an act of seasonable and well-directed benevolence; while the mode of instruction pursued in the

numerous schools now conducted on the national system of education (a mode which, in its legitimate tendency, inculcates a taste and thirst for religious knowledge, a love for the Bible, a veneration for Sunday and the church, as well as general habits of order and moral obedience) encourages strongly the hope, that a large proportion of the children so instructed and educated, will be favourably disposed, as they grow up, to the reading of serious and religious books; and thus will thankfully and profitably avail themselves of the assistance afforded by these institutions wherever they may exist.*

The selection of proper books for the purpose, will be the first consideration on the establishment of a parochial Library. "With the admission of a few works of general information," says Mr. Bridges, "the complexion of

* See "Bickersteth's Christian Student," chap. xv.

the Library should be distinctly evangelical, practical, and popular—formed upon the basis of the divine aphorism—‘One thing is needful.’”*

The following works come under this denomination, and are adapted not only for cottage, but also for farm-house reading, &c. :—

Milner's Sermons, 3 vols.

Burder's Village Sermons.

Lavington's Sermons, 2 vols.

Thornton's Sermons, 3 vols.

Cooper's Sermons, 6 vols.

Fox's Martyrs.

Cecil's Life of Newton.

Memoir of Mrs. Newell.

Orton's Life of Doddridge.

Innes's Select Christian Biography.

Original Memorials, by Rev. J. East.

Fletcher's Life.

Richmond's Annals of the Poor.

Martyn's Life.

Sim's Christian Records.

Gilpin's Lives of the Reformers.

Mrs. Savage's Life.

Edwards's Life of Brainerd.

Doddridge's Life of Gardiner.

* See Bridges's "Christian Ministry."

Robinson's Scripture Characters, 4 vols.

Watts's Scripture History.

Adam's Exposition, 2 vols.

Scripture Stories.

Jenks's Prayers.

Edwards on Redemption.

Bickersteth on Prayer.

—————on the Holy Sacrament.

—————'s Scripture Help.

Flavel's Divine Conduct.

Walker's Practical Christianity.

Serle's Christian Remembrancer.

Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous.

Rambach's Meditations on the Sufferings of Christ.

Buck's Religious Experience.

Morning Meditations.

Henry's Method for Prayer.

Beveridge's Private Thoughts.

Romaine's Walk of Faith.

—————Triumph of Faith.

Boston's Crook in the Lot.

Walker's Christ the Purifier.

Doddridge's Rise and Progress.

Pocket Prayer-Book.

Norden's Poor Man's Rest.

Newton's Cardiphonia.

Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity.

Pocket Sermons.

Baxter's Saints' Rest.

—————Dying Thoughts.

—————Call to the Unconverted.

Baxter's Converse with God.
Alleine's Alarm.
Howe's Delighting in God.
Sibbes's Bruised Reed.
Stonehouse's Sick Man's Friend.
Colquhoun on Spiritual Comfort.
Peer's Companion to the Aged.
Adam's Private Thoughts.
Ambrose's Looking unto Jesus.
Rev. D. Wilson on the Sacrament.
———— on Confirmation.
Scougal's Life of God in the Soul.
Orton's Sacramental Meditations.
Pilgrim's Progress.
Retrospect.
Visits of Mercy, 2 vols.
Cecil's Visit to the House of Mourning.
Village Churchyard, 2 vols.
Village Observer.
Venn's Complete Duty of Man.
Sherwood's Infant's Progress.
———— Henry and his Bearer.
———— Hedge of Thorns.
Margaret Whyte.
Lydia Gladman.
Lucy Franklin.
Janeway's Token.
Watkins's Sunday-School Tracts, 4 vols.
Cecil's Advice to Servants.
Rev. W. C. Wilson's Tracts.
First Day of the Week.

Burder's Missionary Anecdotes.

Davy's Village Conversations on the Liturgy.

Cheap Repository Tracts, 3 vols.

Cottage Comforts, by Mrs. Copley.

Buck's Anecdotes, 3 vols.

Mrs. Taylor's Present of a Mistress to a Young
Servant. &c. &c. &c.

The books should be covered with parchment, or strong brown or cartridge paper. The title should be written on one side of the cover, and the designation of the library to which the book belongs on the other, as well as on the title-page. The number should be printed at the back: by which means, on reference to the catalogue, any volume might be immediately found.

The delivery and exchange of the books should be made as simple as possible. A ledger with an alphabetical index should be kept, in which entries should be made every time that a book is either given out or returned. The following form may be useful.

NAMES.	JANUARY.					FEBRUARY.				MARCH.			
	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	5	12	19	26
Arwood, John	✓ 4	—	✓ 80	—	✓ 80	✓ 22	✓ 40	—	✓ 16	—	✓ 19	—	18
Buller, William	✓ 12	—	✓ 7	—	✓ 70	✓ 9	—	✓ 19	—	✓ 27	—	✓ 28	✓ 15
Brown, Mary	✓ 60	—	—	—	Ill.	✓ 12	—	✓ 15	✓ 19	—	✓ 5	—	1
Clements, John	✓ 6	✓ 26	✓ 27	✓ 66	—	✓ 3	—	✓ 11	—	✓ 45	—	✓ 8	—

The above contains a list of persons resident in the parish, who receive books from the library. The number corresponds with the number in the catalogue and on the book. John Atwood had No. 4 on the 1st of January: he kept it a fortnight, (no entry being made on the 8th,) and then returned it, which is signified by ✓ over No. 4. He had No. 80 on the 15th of January, and brought it back to be re-entered on the 29th of the same month, not having finished the perusal, and a fortnight being the time allowed for keeping it. No. 22 he returned in a week, and to the end of March took the regular fortnight. William Buller read many of his books in a week, and kept none longer than the regular fortnight. Mary Brown kept No. 60 for four weeks; this is accounted for by her illness. John Clements read many of his books in a week, and kept none longer than a fortnight.

A small subscription from the poor towards the expenses of the library will in general be found advisable : as it will give them that sort of property in it which will tend to make them read the books with additional interest. They should on no account suffer the volumes, while in their possession, to be soiled or otherwise injured, or allow them to go out of their own hands. The time for their return should also be strictly observed. Sunday distribution is, generally speaking, objectionable ; though in large parishes, where the poor assemble on the Sabbath from distant hamlets, it may be found expedient to allow them to change their books, owing to the difficulty of their being able to do so on a week-day.

The diffusion of religious tracts is another most important means of usefulness. " The Reformers," says Mr. Bickersteth, " did much in this way. The Society for Promoting Christian

Knowledge early adopted this powerful method of spreading religious truth, which has now been taken up by every denomination of Christians. It is of immense importance, that the tracts of the different societies should contain pure Scriptural truth, unmixed either by *the leaven of the Pharisees*, or of the *Sadducees*. The poor are not likely to be interested in any but those containing the all-cheering and happy tidings of the Gospel of Christ; and such tracts as abound in Scriptural views of the Saviour are most likely not only to be acceptable, but also useful. He is the GRAND ATTRACTION, by whom alone fallen sinners can be brought to God.—(John xii. 32.)”*

Numerous anecdotes might be adduced, were it necessary, to prove the utility of circulating religious tracts: many instances might be mentioned

* See “The Christian Student,” chap. xvi.

of their happy influence, under God's blessing, on the minds of their readers. The following fact proves the truth of this assertion. "A few years since, Mr. ——— resided in the island of ——— for the recovery of his health, where he pursued his usual practice of tract distribution. On one occasion, he was travelling in the island, and was anxious to find out the residence of a friend. He called at a poor cottage to inquire his way, and found he had been led, by the wise providence of God, to pay 'a friendly visit to the house of mourning.' In the cottage there was a poor widow, who had recently lost her husband and her eldest son. They were engaged in business on the mighty waters, and one stormy night they were both drowned. In the room where the widow was sitting, there was a son who had recently fractured his leg, and also an idiot daughter. It is

scarcely possible to conceive a more painful accumulation of affliction. These trying dispensations, however, had not melted the widow's heart: she felt as a wife,—she wept as a mother; but her spirit rebelled against the hand that had inflicted the awful blow. Just at this period the tract distributor called. He inquired his way, and received the necessary information. He was then anxious to benefit the distressed family. He found them deplorably ignorant, no one being able to read. He contributed to their wants, and was pursuing his course, thinking it quite useless to leave a tract. He had proceeded some distance, when he regretted he had not left a messenger of mercy; and, returning to the cottage, he gave them one called "JAMES COVEY," and requested the widow to get some of her son's friends to read it, when they called to see him. It subsequently

appeared, that the widow went to a publican's daughter in the village, who read the little work to the family, and the widow's heart appeared to be impressed under the power of the truth. Afflictions had prepared the way for the entrance of divine light, and she, who was called to sow in tears, was soon to reap in joy.

“ The tract distributor, some time after this event, again visited the same district, and soon found that the history of poor Covey had made a very deep impression upon many minds. As he was riding through the village he was soon recognised, and many children ran after him, crying out with much earnestness, ‘ Are you the gentleman that gave away the COVEYS?— Give us some COVEYS.’ This request was readily complied with, and the little tracts were received with much joy.

“ During his visit to the place, he was not unmindful of the widow: he

made inquiries about her, and, to his great delight, found that she diligently attended the means of grace. He ascertained that before his visit she was considered one of the most profane women in the district, but now she hallowed the name of the Lord. A most evident change had taken place, and it was poor COVEY who was the honoured instrument of leading the afflicted woman to the ‘Father of the fatherless, and the Friend of the widow.’ No doubt, she could affectingly use the language of Covey, ‘Tell others, who are as wicked as I was, that a poor blaspheming sinner found mercy with God, through faith in the blood of Christ! Tell them that since *I* have found mercy, none that seek it need despair.’

“The state of a person’s mind may frequently be ascertained by trifling circumstances. There appears to have been a grateful recollection in

the widow's mind of this visit of mercy. Shortly before Mr. —— left the island, she felt anxious to present to him a small memorial of her gratitude. Silver and gold she had none. She went into her little garden, and having plucked her best flowers presented them to her spiritual benefactor, begging that he would let her know of his safe arrival at his own residence.

“ It is true the widow's flowers have long since faded, but the gentleman to whom they were given frequently recalls these little circumstances with pleasure, because he has every reason to believe that the donor continues ‘ to flourish like the palm-tree, to grow like a cedar in Lebanon, and to bring forth fruit in old age.’ ”*

One more interesting anecdote respecting the instrumentality of tract distribution shall be related, as an

* See the Twenty-ninth Report of the Religious Tract Society.

encouragement to Christian females to engage in this work of love and mercy.

“A few years since, * * * * * visited one of those small but interesting sea-port towns which abound on the western shores of England. This little town, though far remote from any of our populous and wealthy cities, where the friends of the Redeemer abound, and so many institutions for the promotion of the best interests of men flourish, was not overlooked by Him ‘who judgeth not as man judgeth;’ and, though on an humble scale, various means were employed in order to communicate to the inhabitants that knowledge which alone can ‘make wise unto salvation.’ One of these was the institution of a Loan Tract Society; and * * * * * esteemed it both a duty and a privilege to become one of its visitors. The district which was appointed for her weekly visits pos-

sessed a peculiarly romantic character. It consisted of lofty cliffs overhanging a bay, and commanding as far as the eye could reach an expanse of waters, sometimes reflecting the varied hues of the firmament above them, at others realizing the sublime description of the Psalmist in the 104th Psalm, and usually covered with a number of vessels, especially fishing-boats, which constituted almost the sole property and the only means of subsistence to their owners.

“ The reception given to the little publications was generally encouraging. By some, indeed, they were received with the indifference so natural to the unrenewed mind ; but by others with interest and pleasure, and by a few with gratitude. Among this latter number was a female, whose appearance, on their first interview, greatly interested * * * * *. Her habitation indicated poverty ; but it was

clean and neat; whilst her manner and conversation rendered it manifest that she had seen better days. This interest was much increased by the following occurrence. She had received, one week, the tract, (No. 21, of the Religious Tract Society,) 'To THE AFFLICTED;' and, on * * * * *s calling to exchange it, requested that she might be allowed to retain it a few days longer, to finish copying it. 'Have you been much pleased with it, that you make this request?' * * * * * inquired. 'I have, indeed,' she replied: 'it has taught me what I never knew before—why I have been afflicted; and this hymn at the close speaks the feelings of my heart better than I can myself express them.' * * * * * promised to give her a similar one; and, on taking it, asked her whether the indisposition under which she evidently laboured, constituted the afflictive dispensation for which she had been previously unable

to account. She shook her head, and replied, ‘ Oh, no : this is the least of my troubles ; though this in my present circumstances presses heavily upon me. But if you will sit down, I will tell you my history.’ * * * * * accepted the invitation, and, seating herself by her side, listened with much interest to her statement. She told her the particulars of her early days—the death of her father, the adverse circumstances in which her husband was placed, his conviction of the crime of smuggling, and her own personal affliction. The poor woman wept bitterly after mentioning her husband’s imprisonment ; and was for some time unable to proceed. ‘ Is he still in prison ? ’ * * * * * asked. ‘ Yes : only six months of his time have elapsed.’ ‘ You hear from him ? ’ ‘ Yes, frequently. He is a kind husband, and I know he feels more for me than for himself. I might be permitted to see him, but the distance

is great, and I have no means of bearing the expense. Several gentlemen have kindly interested themselves for us, but in vain. Smuggling has increased so much lately, that the magistrates resolved to make an example of the next person that was taken. I thought it hard,' she said, 'that for what *then* seemed to me a slight offence, he should meet with such a heavy punishment; and many murmuring thoughts were continually arising in my mind, for I did not at that time feel the sinfulness of the engagement, nor regard it as a violation of the laws of God as well as of man.

“‘ I was thrown, with my poor little ones, on the parish. My husband, however, was allowed to work in the prison, and the produce of his labour he always sent to me, entreating me to keep up my spirits, and to look forward to the time when we should meet again.

“ ‘ Poor fellow ! I would not tell him for some time, that the disease which had just made its appearance when he left home, had been since rapidly gaining ground ; but when the doctors assured me that it was a confirmed cancer, and that nothing could be done for me without a painful operation, I wrote to him to ask him his advice. I shall never forget his reply,’ she said, while the tears streamed down her cheeks ; ‘ he knew not how to express the anguish he felt at this new affliction, and at the impossibility of his coming to me. He desired me to be guided entirely by the opinion of the medical gentlemen ; and, if they thought an operation the only means of saving my life, to submit to it for his sake, and for the sake of my children.’ ”

“ This afflicted woman went to the infirmary ; but the medical gentlemen considered an operation would be useless, and she returned to her home.

* * * * * had many interviews with her. After a considerable conflict, the poor woman was led to feel herself a sinner, and her need of a Saviour, and to look to Jesus Christ, who invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest. She was enabled to resign herself to the Divine will, and say, 'Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done!'

“ It was, doubtless, under God's superintending providence that ***** , without any knowledge of the circumstances of the individual visited, left the tract before alluded to at her house. She read it with attention ; it peculiarly suited her case ; and, through the influence of the Holy Spirit accompanying its perusal, she was led to trace all her sufferings to sin as their cause, and brought to implore mercy through a crucified Redeemer. Nor were these transient impressions : her convictions of sin, and of the atoning blood of Christ,

became deeper and deeper; and the language of praise for the mercy which had revealed such a Saviour to her, was continually on her lips.

“The desire of this poor woman’s heart was granted her: for, through the interposition of some kind friends, the imprisonment of her husband terminated about a fortnight before her death; and he was permitted to watch over her last moments, to receive her dying charge, and to witness the wondrous change which the grace of God had effected in his once thoughtless wife. This unexpected event she viewed as a new and especial mercy. She died in peace, and her

‘Last faltering accents whispered praise.’”*

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to give any list of the tracts most suitable for distribution, as the catalogues of

* For a full account of this interesting fact, see No. 810, of the Narrative Series of the Religious Tract Society.

the Religious Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Irish Religious Tract and Book Society, will furnish abundant variety; selections from which must be left to the discretion and personal knowledge of the distributor.

Various modes might be suggested for the circulation of tracts, though the *manner* of disseminating them must necessarily depend in some degree upon local circumstances. The following plan has been acted upon with success for several months in one of the midland counties; and so simple is the arrangement, that, with comparatively little trouble, between seventy and eighty villages have been constantly supplied, and eight thousand tracts kept in perpetual circulation, except during harvest time, when it has been found from experience expedient to suspend the distribution for a few weeks. The circuit alluded to, comprises eighty

hamlets or villages. The tracts (consisting chiefly of the publications above mentioned) are carried about in bags of dark blue cotton, with white labels on the outside, numbered 1, 2, 3, &c. They amount to one hundred in number, and each bag contains eighty tracts, two of which are stitched together in one stiff cover of pasteboard, making the bag to contain forty covers or books, all of which have the number of the bag written upon them. *Only two sorts of tracts* are put into each bag, as experience proves that it is better for each visitor to circulate the *same set* of tracts at the *same time* throughout her district. This plan prevents those interchanges among neighbours, which would exhaust the variety and soon create confusion; and also affords the poor an opportunity of conversing together on any subjects which may have awakened their mutual interest.

The hundred bags alluded to, are

deposited at the house of a Clergyman in the village of * * * * *, when not in circulation.* Eighty of them are constantly in use; and the remaining twenty are kept in reserve at home, in order that there may always be a supply of fresh ones to exchange.

The eighty villages in which the tracts are circulated, are divided nominally into five different circuits or districts, each of which includes so many villages or hamlets. The Clergyman residing in one of the principal villages belonging to each of these districts, makes it his business to procure *agents* in the different villages that fall under his care, who shall distribute and collect

* The arrangement of the *one* central dépôt was made by mutual agreement, in order that a greater variety of tracts might be circulated in the five different districts. In many instances the above plan might be objectionable: it is rather mentioned in this place as a successful experiment within a certain sphere, than recommended for general adoption; though, with various modifications, and where local circumstances are favourable, it might frequently be found practicable.

the tracts from cottage to cottage once every fortnight. Most of these agents are well-disposed young women, (the elder scholars of the Sunday schools,) who regard it as a privilege to be allowed to co-operate in the general diffusion of Divine truth; and the whole system of superintendence is chiefly directed by the *wives* of the resident Clergy.

The bags make a complete round in every district; that is, the bag sent to district 1, visits each village in that district before it is returned to the depôt at * * * * *. They are forwarded, as much as may be, in geographical rotation: thus, No. 1 goes to A, the nearest village; No. 2, to B, the adjoining hamlet; No. 3, to C, the next place. The next movement is, No. 3, to D; No. 2, to C; No. 1, to B; and so on.

Eight thousand tracts are thus kept in perpetual circulation; and the interest

they excite is extreme. Once or twice a penny has been put into the collector's bag, with a request that such or such a tract might be retained, owing to the interest with which it had been read.

The advantages of employing the young persons alluded to, are two-fold. In the first place, their assistance is valuable because the extensive distribution requires multiplied agency; and, in the second place, the effect produced on their own minds by being employed in the service of others, is beneficial. To do good to our fellow-creatures is one of the surest methods of getting good ourselves. The young people employed in circulating the tracts from house to house, are naturally induced to read them themselves and to converse together about them: thus an increasing interest in their contents is excited, and communicated to those who receive them. They become

interested in promoting the mental, moral, and religious improvement, of their neighbours ; and not unfrequently have their countenances been seen to brighten up with animation and gratitude, when they have spoken of the delight with which their tracts have been perused, and of the earnest solicitude with which the poor are anticipating their tract-day.*

The importance of circulating religious tracts, is now so generally acknowledged, that little more need perhaps be said in reference to it. Many advantages likely to accrue from this simple mode of disseminating instruc-

* The expense of procuring the tracts in the first instance (should it prove any obstacle to the formation of such little societies as these) may be defrayed by small subscriptions amongst the poor. Supposing twenty-four subscribers only of 1*d.* per week are obtained ; this will produce 2*s.* per week, or 5*l.* 4*s.* a year. This sum, at the *full* prices of the Religious Tract Society, would purchase a weekly supply for each subscriber, of one twenty-four-page tract, two of twelve pages, three of eight pages, or six of four pages.

tion, will immediately occur to the Clergyman's wife, if she directs her attention to the subject.

In the first place, extensive good may be effected at a small expense. Where tracts are casually given, they are too often torn, neglected, or misused; but, when they are merely *lent*, they are likely to be taken care of and read with attention, as the visitor is expected to call again for them, and occasionally to converse upon their contents. In the second place, instruction may be brought home through this medium, to individuals who neglect or reject advice conveyed through any other channel. Many who would not attend a place of Divine worship, and who would make every attempt to avoid domiciliary visits, have had the truths of the everlasting Gospel brought home to their hearts (as in the instance of the poor widow, above related,) by the perusal of religious tracts thus left

at their doors; and hence have been led to delight in attendance at the house of God, and in the means of grace. Nor is this all: for the interest awakened by these little ‘messengers of mercy’ has often excited a desire for the Scriptures, to which they refer and direct the reader; and many persons have thus been induced to become subscribers to Bible associations, in order to obtain possession of this treasure. Many children who were growing up in ignorance, whilst their parents were careless about their education and the salvation of their immortal souls, have been sent to the Sunday and other schools through the instrumentality of religious tracts. The Sabbath, instead of being desecrated and despised, has been called “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.”* Cold, hard hearts, have been softened and melted under the wonders of redeeming love there

* Isa. lviii. 13.

set forth; the Saviour has been endeared, honoured, glorified; and thousands, who are now rejoicing around the throne of God and of the Lamb, probably ascribe their first religious impressions to the perusal of these simple publications.

Let the wife of the Christian Minister then, regard it as her incumbent duty to do all in her power to carry a plan so simple and so effective as that of the loan-tract system into general operation. Let her take encouragement from the assurance that if she continue “stedfast, unmoveable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, her labour will not be in vain in the Lord;”* but that the seeds of Divine truth which she has been the humble instrument of sowing, being moistened with heavenly dew, shall hereafter bud, blossom, and bring forth fruit, to the honour and praise of God.

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

CHAP. VII.

MEANS SUGGESTED FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE POOR.

Prov. xiii. 11.—“He that gathereth by labour shall increase.”

IN seasons like the present, when poverty stalks abroad, and the pay of the labourer is barely sufficient to furnish a scanty pittance for the weekly support of his family, any addition which the female members of it are able to contribute to his income will be of material service. In cases where situations can be procured for them in the families of the wealthy, they of course become independent of the parental roof. But circumstances are continually occurring,—from weak-

ness of health, from their not having as yet attained a sufficient age, or from their assistance being required at home, in attending to the younger branches of the family,—in which they are obliged to remain at the house of their parents, without contributing their portion to the maintenance of the household. The Clergyman's wife who has the welfare of her poor neighbours truly at heart, will exert herself in such cases, to provide some light and easy employment adapted to their age and sex, and which may be discontinued or resumed as circumstances allow. Any regular occupation would perhaps be impracticable; whilst, at the same time, several hours of every day, more especially in the winter, might be saved, and appropriated to some little useful employment, which would produce at least a trifling addition to the earnings of the family.

Let her, in the first place, take a

glance at her *Speculum Parochiale*, and make a list of those who stand in need of work. For instance: Ann Sumners, aged 16, is without occupation. Jane, her sister, is similarly circumstanced. Lucy Maul, aged 17, has nothing to do; though, as her mother has no young children, she has plenty of time at her own disposal. A little quiet occupation at home might be profitable to the latter also, as her health unfits her for any laborious manual employ.

These, and numerous instances of a similar nature, occur in every parish. The Clergyman's wife will rejoice to exercise her ingenuity in devising various employments adapted to the age and respective qualifications of each individual, fully assured that the best means of effectually assisting the poor is to give encouragement to the economy of time, and the efforts of industry.

The spinning of flax may be suggested as a desirable occupation. A quantity of this article may generally be obtained at 1s. per lb., and distributed, as occasion requires, among those poor women who stand in need of work. Most of them, probably, know how to spin, and few will get through more than 1 or 2 lbs. a week. Ten shillings therefore, laid out in this manner, would furnish a poor woman with employment for several weeks: and she might be remunerated for her labour at the rate of 1s. per lb. ‘But what are we to do with such a quantity of thread?’ may perhaps be asked. ‘Our wardrobes are already supplied, and our household linen complete.’ Be it so;—but our charity-bundles, our child-bed linen, and linen for the sick, will stand in need of constant supplies: and a sheet, or a pair of sheets, may often form a most useful present to a poor family. Let us collect

then, all our thread together, and send it to some poor old weaver either in our own parish or in some adjacent hamlet, whom it will be charity to employ. He will thank us for our custom, and send us back a quantity of strong linen cloth. The average price for weaving is 8*d.* or 9*d.* per yard. Supposing some of our poor women to have spun our thread, we may now employ their daughters. Young girls will thankfully make up the garments we require at 6*d.* or 8*d.* each on an average ; and thus our bundles will be supplied and our poor's box replenished with new and strong articles of clothing.* Should there be no objection, we might occasionally allow these young women to spend a day or two in turn at the parsonage, and either instruct them ourselves, or

* Stout calico, remnants of print, stuff, &c., may be obtained for the same purposes, at a reasonable price.

desire one of our servants to instruct them, in cutting out the articles they are about to make. This will double the benefit conferred ; for it too often happens that a young woman marries, and becomes involved in the cares of a family, with but little notion of domestic management, especially of that frugality, economy, and *contrivance*, which are essentially important, though too generally neglected, among the poor.*

If our articles of clothing increase beyond our present wants, they may be deposited in the clothing-room

* The Minister's wife would do the most efficient good to that class of young persons who are seeking situations as servants, by occasionally receiving them, if possible, into her house for a few days, not merely to work at the needle, but to render general assistance, and to have an opportunity of improving themselves in all departments of household business. Habits of cleanliness, industry, and good order, would thus be inculcated ; and the impressions made on a young and sensitive mind, by the orderly proceedings of a serious and well-regulated family, might be such as never to be effaced.

mentioned at the conclusion of this chapter.*

The poor women might also have wool given them to spin, and their children might be paid so much a pair according to the size, for the stockings which they knit.† These stockings might likewise be sent to the clothing-room, as they are brought home.

Some of the young people too, might be employed in lace-making. Should there happen to be any young female in the place, whose health, or other circumstances, disqualifies her for field labour and active employment, a lace-pillow might be procured at

* Or we may request our friends to become purchasers. Good strong homespun huckaback might be sold for towelling at 2*s.* per yard, and linen cloth at 1*s.* 3*d.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* Thus we should obtain a small profit to add to the contents of our charity-purse.

† The usual price for knitting a full-sized pair of men's stockings, plain, is 1*s.* 3*d.*; ribbed, 1*s.* 6*d.*; a full-sized pair of women's ditto, 1*s.*; and children's socks, 8*d.* or 9*d.* per pair. But the price of course varies in different places.

but little expense; and, by advancing ten or twelve shillings to some person for a fortnight's instruction, she might be enabled to earn her own livelihood, and to repay the sum kindly expended on her behalf. The great discouragement which ordinarily presents itself to the young lace-maker, is the difficulty of finding purchasers for her work when completed. If, therefore, we could, with the aid of friends, undertake to ensure a ready market for any little article thus manufactured by our parishioners, a stimulus would be given to industry, the parish relieved from the support of an idle member, and a valuable addition made to the wages of the industrious labourer.

As it is very desirable that the use of the needle should not be forgotten or neglected, a sewing-school might be opened in the parish one or two evenings in the week during the summer months, to which all the young

persons who earn their livelihood by making gloves, or bobbin-lace, might be invited.

The coarse straw bonnets worn by the school-children, supposing that their Sunday dress is found for them, might furnish another little manufacture to some industrious poor woman. Let her be supplied with straw after the harvest, and she will have a useful occupation for many a long winter evening. When a quantity of plat is made, it may be sewn up into simple cottage bonnets at very little expense. The children of the family may be taught to assist their mother in sorting and cutting the straw; for even the youngest child in the parish should not stand idle, if any thing can be found for it to do. Habits of industry cannot be too early instilled.

An employment might, occasionally, be found at the parsonage for some of the elder girls, in stitching the tracts

together, and sorting and selecting them, whenever the tract-bags (mentioned in Chapter VI.) required repairing or replenishing.* At such times, we might take occasion to speak to them of the privilege of being allowed to take even the lowest and most subordinate part in helping the work of God, and excite them to active and habitual devotedness in the service of their fellow-creatures.

The advantages of employing the female poor will be found considerable, independent of the addition thus afforded to the weekly wages of the family. There are, perhaps, few things which more tend to check the efforts

* The writer is aware that, in many instances, where the tract distribution is carried on on a small scale, it would be unnecessary to engage girls for this purpose. In the district alluded to, however, in Chap. VI, full employment is found for two or three young women, for a fortnight or more, every autumn, (when the bags are called in,) in looking over and fresh arranging the tracts, inserting fresh ones in the place of those that are either torn or lost, &c.

of the mind, than the consciousness of ability to add something to the general maintenance of the household, if employment were obtained, while unable to find an employer. The very habit of inactivity engenders a listless and repining spirit, which complains of, rather than surmounts, the difficulties of life: and hence, the importance of providing some quiet occupation for those members of the family who are not engaged in laborious business, is obvious.

A diligent and regular employment of time tends much to the encouragement of religion and good order. Where idleness is once allowed to creep in, every vice and evil follow in its train. The young girl who has been habituated to pass her time in listless vacuity, is exposed as she grows up to innumerable temptations. Snares, often of the most fatal tendency, beset her on every hand:

The great enemy of souls is ever lying in wait to catch the thoughtless and unwary; and young persons of the above description are peculiarly exposed to his artifices. But, besides the moral evil produced by want of employment amongst the poor, the effect upon observers is painful. Few things perhaps, give a more unfavourable aspect to a poor and populous parish, than to see a number of idle females, slovenly and untidy in their attire, lounging about with listlessness and unconcern, and gossiping among their neighbours, instead of supplying their parents' or their husbands' cottages with comforts of their own earning.

We must, therefore, seek by every means in our power to arrest this evil. A little experience will teach us that in no other way can we so effectually check it, as by giving every encouragement to honest industry. Not only

will religious and social order be thus promoted, but a steady habit of mind produced; and though the profit acquired may be small, yet cheerfulness, peace, and comfort, will smile upon the cottage inmates, and crown the efforts of their industrious families.

It now only remains to say a few words in reference to the clothing-room, casually mentioned above. In examining the wants and condition of the poor, we can scarcely have failed to remark that they place a much higher value upon articles purchased by their own industry, than upon any voluntarily bestowed on them, and prize them in proportion to the pains they have cost. For this reason, we shall find it better to allow the poor to purchase clothing at a cheap rate by the produce of their own labour, than to expect it from us as a gift. The articles mentioned above, made by those individuals who stood in need

of employ, will serve to furnish the clothing-room, together with whole pieces of flannel, calico, and stuff; blankets, shoes, &c. This clothing-room should be open to the poor either once or twice in the week, according to circumstances. The purchasers should be limited to fifteen shillings debt, and receive a ticket on their procuring an article or articles, specifying the amount of the debt; and this debt should be paid off by a weekly sum of 6*d.* or 1*s.*, which they may be desired to bring to the parsonage-house when convenient. No second purchase must in any case be allowed till the first debt is paid. Losses will, of course, occasionally occur, by the death of individuals, by the removal of some to other parishes, by sickness, and sometimes, though not very frequently it is hoped, from want of principle, as the confidence placed in their integrity and honour

will tend to produce a spirit of self-respect and honesty.* The clothing-shop will possess another advantage, in enabling us to become more intimately acquainted with the circumstances and relative wants of the poor. Being present in the clothing-room at the appointed hour, we shall have opportunity to inquire into the state of their families, their health, their temporal necessities, &c. Kindness and affability will induce them to make known to us their various wants. The aged women will pour their little troubles into our bosom, and seek for consolation in our sympathy; the mothers will speak to us of their children, and request our advice and aid; whilst the young will look up to us as their benefactors and their

* The plan here recommended is taken from a most useful little manual which should be in the hands of every Clergyman's wife, entitled, "Parochial Duties practically illustrated."

friends; and our influence over them will increase in proportion to the affectionate interest we evince in their welfare.*

* In some instances, a clothing-room on the above plan might be objectionable, owing to the uncertainty of regular payment, or of the purchasers (if very poor) involving themselves in debts which they might not be able or willing eventually to discharge. A weekly deposit of 1*d.* or 2*d.* per week, (with the promise of some slight addition at the end of the year,) according to the suggestion made in Chap. I. Part II. might be preferable.

CHAP. VIII.

CONCLUSION.

PSALM lxxiii. 24.—“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.”

IN conclusion, the writer would desire again to revert to that spring and source whence all these streams of active benevolence must flow; and venture once more to remind the Clergyman's wife of the importance of *simplicity of purpose, reliance on Divine assistance, constraining love, and diligent attention* to her several duties, if she truly desire to become a fellow-labourer with her husband in the vineyard of her Lord and Saviour.

Perhaps no qualification can be mentioned which will more deeply affect her habitual conduct than *simplicity of*

design. Let her object be ever one and the same. Let the opinion of the world around her be despised and rejected; and let her language be that of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "This one thing I do."* So far as domestic and family obligations admit, let her ever be found at her post, sedulously pursuing her grand object—the advancement of her husband's ministry, the salvation of the souls committed to his pastoral charge, and the alleviation of their temporal wants. Let her feel, that, on becoming a Clergyman's wife, she has, as it were, wedded herself to her husband's parish, and to the best interests of his flock. All worldly compliances, worldly company, worldly visits, must henceforward be relinquished, not only because they occupy much time and tend to great distraction of mind, but because they are incon-

* Phil. iii. 13.

sistent with that spirit of self-denial and disinterested devotedness, which ought to mark the character of the true servant of God. Let her not, therefore, endeavour, as too many do, to unite the irreconcilable interests of earth and heaven ; but renouncing the world, and the things of the world, its fashions, its amusements, its pursuits, let her seek to make religion her governing principle, both in the ordinary concerns of life, and in the important duties which her new situation involves. Her actions will have the love of God for their motive, and the glory of God for their end. “ Be not conformed to this world ; but be ye transformed in the spirit of your minds,”* will be the motto inscribed on her heart, and exemplified in her conduct. Kindness and hospitality she will indeed cultivate with unceasing care, but no inducements will divert

* Rom. xii. 2.

her from her purpose, or tempt her to lower the standard of the Gospel by entering into the vain and frivolous enjoyments of the worldly-minded. These will, indeed, become tasteless and oppressive to her, just in proportion as the love of Christ takes possession of her soul, and her desire after holiness increases.

Combined with simplicity of purpose, *an unreserved dependence upon Divine grace and assistance must be habitually cherished.* The wife of the Christian Minister will find much to try her faith. A variety of difficulties and impediments will perpetually be thrown in her way, and occasionally retard her progress. It is only by a "patient continuance in well doing," that she can expect to obtain success. She may, however, take encouragement from the reflection, that she serves One in whose hand are all hearts, and who has promised to co-

operate with, and bless his people in their labours of love. This assurance will impart cheerfulness in difficulty, and inspire confidence amid surrounding discouragements. Like David, she will “encourage herself in the Lord her God,” remembering that He has expressly said, “I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,”* and that He is “able to make all grace abound towards her, that she always having all sufficiency in all things may abound in every good work.”† The weakest efforts are often productive of the most important results. Female exertions have ever been owned and blessed of God. Even “a cup of cold water,” we are told, “given in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward.”‡

* Isa. xli. 10.

† 2 Cor. ix. 8.

‡ Matt. x. 42.

Connected with a spirit of dependence on Divine strength, will the principle of *constraining love* to her God and Saviour be exhibited. This will naturally flow from faith, and be produced by it. Her simple repose in Jesus, and a sense of the many obligations under which she lies to his care and support, will impress her mind with holy love and filial affection. She will love much, because much has been done for her. This will (as has been more fully stated in a preceding chapter) become her grand prevailing motive throughout every fresh exercise of faith. Every renewed instance which she experiences of her Saviour's protecting care, will become a fresh incitement to love, and bind her more closely to Him "whose she is, and whom she serves;" and will call out all her energies in his service.

But while faith and love are in exercise, much *diligence* and self-denial will

be required ere her endeavours can be crowned with success. An active and *diligent prosecution* of each plan, as it may suggest itself, will be most important. "Human life is made up of a succession of little occupations and duties, which without tedious minuteness cannot be related; but, in reality, it is a constant fidelity in the aggregate of these little things, that forms the true greatness, and grandeur, and solidity, of the Christian character." A strict economy of time must be observed. A specific portion, as far as possible, of each day must bring with it its appropriate duty, in order to ensure the conscientious discharge of that duty. Thus a larger number of objects will be accomplished than could otherwise be effected. Nor would this be the only happy result arising from such a course of conduct. Example sometimes speaks more loudly than precept; the good effects resulting

from this system would be silently observed, and others would be induced to "go and do likewise." She would also herself enjoy a gratifying reward in observing the religious and moral order of the parish to be promoted by her exertions; whilst habits of industry, regularity, and quiet diligent perseverance, would be inculcated amongst its inhabitants.

"Christianity," remarks Mrs. More, "requires that our faith be at once fervent and sober; that our love be both ardent and lasting; that our patience be not only heroic but gentle; she demands dauntless zeal and genuine humility; active services and complete self-renunciation; high attainments in goodness, with deep consciousness of defect; courage in reproving, and meekness in bearing reproof; a quick perception of what is sinful, with a willingness to forgive the offender; active virtue ready to

do all, and passive virtue ready to *bear* all. We must stretch every faculty in the service of our Lord, and yet bring every thought into obedience to Him: while we aim to live in the exercise of every Christian grace, we must account ourselves unprofitable servants: we must *strive* for the crown, yet receive it as a *gift*; and then lay it at our Master's feet. While we are busily trading in the world with our Lord's talents, we must "commune with our heart, and be still:" while we strive to practise the purest disinterestedness, we must be contented, though we meet with selfishness in return; and while laying out our lives for the good of mankind, we must submit to reproach without murmuring, and to ingratitude without resentment. And to render us equal to all these services, Christianity bestows not only the precept, but the power; she does what the great poet of ethics

lamented that reason could not do, "she lends us arms as well as rules." For here, if not only the worldly and the timid, but the humble and the well-disposed, should demand with fear and trembling, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Revelation makes its own reviving answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."*

It is not to be expected that, in all cases, the domestic circumstances of the Clergyman's wife should allow her to embrace the suggestions offered in the preceding chapters, to their full extent. Large pecuniary means, and a release from family duties would be necessary, in order to enter *fully* into the above-mentioned plans. Still, to a certain degree, they may be carried into execution, and modified according to local and other circumstances. The spirit and character of the Christian

* See Mrs. H. More's "Female Education," Vol. ii. chap. 20.

female may be preserved, and a large blessing result from the principles thus maintained and acted upon; and the labours of her husband will be materially relieved by her co-operation and support.

If she be the mother of a young family, and bound to the quiet retirement of home by the endearing ties of maternal affection, and the sacred duties involved in that tender appellation, still some little time may be redeemed for the work of the Lord, without intrenching too much upon the imperious claims of domestic life.

Some of the plans above mentioned as devolving upon the female, may, perhaps not inappropriately, be set on foot and conducted by the Clergyman himself, when personal responsibilities confine his partner, and may be carried forward by their mutual co-operation, or hereafter consigned to

her entire superintendence, as circumstances admit. Let only the principle be laid down, that they are fellow-labourers in their Master's vineyard, equally interested in the well-being of their people, and the share of labour allotted to each will be readily apportioned.

— Happy, thrice happy, the Christian female, who is permitted thus to consecrate her life, her time, and her talents, to the service of her God and Saviour! He will not forget her work and labour of love. She shall receive a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall bestow in that day, when “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”*

* Dan. xii. 3.







